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EXALTED FISHERMAN; A PRACTICA  
AND DEVOTIONAL STUDY IN THE L  
EXPERIENCES OF THE APOSTLE ST





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The  
**Exalted Fisherman**

*A Practical and Devotional Study in  
the Life and Experiences of the  
Apostle St. Peter*

BY  
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## Foreword.

WE are in the age of the practical. Books and men are valuable as they touch in a practical way daily problems and common life. In the religious realm as well as elsewhere that only is worth while which is helpful. There is a place for doctrine and theory, but utility has a stronger appeal for this age.

With a view to the practical and the devotional this volume is written. The character of Saint Peter is prolific in helpful suggestions. These suggestions are herein applied in the practical and devotional way. The historical, descriptive, and exegetical elements are not omitted, but the practical and devotional are chief.

The general plan is to present the life of Saint Peter by treating chronologically each prominent recorded incident in his life. The life is divided into three parts. By studying

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the details of each part a comprehensive view of the life is received and the suggestive lessons readily appropriated. The plan offers much material of value to ministers, teachers, and Christian workers generally.

The author desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to many authors and works, chief among which are "The Training of the Twelve," by A. B. Bruce; "The Life and Times of Jesus," by Edersheim; "The Miracles of Our Saviour," by W. M. Taylor; "The Apostolic Life," by Joseph Parker; Hastings' Bible Dictionary, and The Cambridge Bible.

PART ONE.  
**THE TESTING TIME.**  
(From the Call of Peter to Pentecost.)



## CHAPTER I.

### THE CALL OF SIMON.

THERE is in Switzerland a class of men whose business is to photograph the mountains of the Alps and sell the pictures to travelers. These men have found that some of the mountains are too large to be taken by their cameras, hence their viewpoint must be shifted and such mountains as the Matterhorn be taken in sections.

It is likewise true that some lives are so great that they can not be photographed at a single glance or from a single viewpoint. When we undertake to photograph the lives of those men whose character proportions were made colossal by their spiritual experiences and by their association with the Son of God, we discover that the picture must be taken in sections. The different periods composing the life must be noticed. The steps in the development of the life, and the influences leading to that development must be studied. This fact is signally true of that life

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which began its fellowship with the Savior as an uncouth fisherman, and closed it as an exalted and empowered apostle,—the life of Simon Peter, the exalted fisherman.

The boyhood days of a great life are always full of interest to the student inasmuch as “the child is the father of the man.” The child that is foretells the man that is to be. The environment of Peter’s early days evidently affected somewhat his later life, inasmuch as he was brought up in a fish town. The home of his childhood was Bethsaida, the word meaning in the original, “Fish-town.” This was the Bethsaida that stood on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Here Peter’s parents lived their humble lives. The father was evidently a fisherman, Jona by name, while, according to tradition, the mother’s name was Joanna. Peter and Andrew, his brother, were taught the craft of their father and grew up to know little outside of the circle of a fisherman’s life. The education of Peter was apparently a very limited one, consisting of the meager instruction he received in the synagogue schools found in almost every Jewish community. That he was unlettered is evident from a

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reference to him in the Book of Acts (4:13), wherein he is spoken of as being "unlearned and ignorant." The probability is that Peter spent his early days more in work than in study. This fact is all the more probable since Peter seems to have been left an orphan, as is concluded by some students because no reference is made to his parents. In his fishing enterprises he is represented as being associated with James and John, but his father is not mentioned. Hence, it is inferred that Peter was one of that class of boys who at an early age have to provide for themselves.

Most of Peter's early life was likely lived in Bethsaida. Later, however, when the Gospel accounts open, we find him married and living in Capernaum with his wife and mother-in-law. Very little is said concerning his wife, but her loyalty to him and his cause is inferred from a tradition which asserts that in the end she shared martyrdom with Peter for the cause of Christ.

The time of Peter's birth is not definitely known. It is not later than 27 or 28 A. D., when we find him a man with a family living in Capernaum. At that time he must have

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been a man of mature years. We may safely assume that his birth occurred some time prior to the birth of Jesus. He is represented in tradition and in art as being older than others of the disciples. In the lists of the apostles given in the Gospels, Peter's name stands first, which may lend some color to the belief that he was first in years among The Twelve.

When John the Baptist came preaching the doctrine of repentance, Peter became one of his disciples, and with others was duly baptized. The leading of Peter from this discipleship with John into final apostleship with Christ was a process consisting of at least three distinct steps. We may designate them as the first call to discipleship, the second call to discipleship, and the choosing as an apostle.

The first call to discipleship with Christ occurred along the River Jordan, at a spot not far from the line separating Samaria from Judea. On the day following his testimony before the priests and Levites, John the Baptist was walking with his new disciples John and Andrew, when Jesus appeared before them, John the Baptist intro-



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ducing Him by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." John and Andrew, who up to this time had been the disciples of John the Baptist, turned and followed Jesus. These men have the distinction of being the first persons of whom it was said, "They followed Jesus." However, on that same day, Andrew, with the true evangelistic spirit, sought out his own brother, Simon Peter, and brought him to Jesus. The fact that Simon was at this time called to discipleship is seen from the statement addressed to him by Jesus, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." This incident constituted Peter's first call to discipleship. (John 1:35-42.)

On the day following this call, Jesus, intending to go into Galilee, called two other disciples, Philip and Nathanael. With this company of five followers He proceeded to Cana, where the first miracle, that of turning water into wine, was performed. The movements of this little company are followed only with some difficulty, but it appears that they journeyed from Cana to Capernaum. After tarrying there a short

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time, they journeyed to Jerusalem, where occurred the first cleansing of the temple by Jesus, and also the conversation with Nicodemus. Then came the journey northward again, the little company passing through Samaria, in which country occurred the famous conversation between Christ and the woman of Samaria. Jesus journeyed with the disciples as far as Cana, where it seems that a temporary separation occurred between the disciples and their Master. The disciples from this point seem to have proceeded to Capernaum, while Jesus went again to Jerusalem to attend an unnamed feast. Later, Jesus returned to Nazareth, where occurred His rejection by the people of His own town. Thence He proceeded to Capernaum, where His disciples had preceded Him, and where He found them at their former occupation of fishing.

The second call of Peter to discipleship occurred at this point. Peter and Andrew, in company with James and John, were fishing in the Sea of Galilee. They had toiled all night and caught nothing. In the morning Jesus appeared to the tired fishermen and turned their disappointment and failure

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into joy and success. He instructed Simon to push out his boat from the shore and let down his net for a new effort. After raising a brief objection, Simon followed the instructions, and he and his friends caught that morning such a draught of fishes as never before had rewarded their efforts. The effect was more pronounced on Peter than on any of his companions. He seemed to catch a vision of the power and authority of his Master, and upon landing he fell at the feet of Jesus and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." It was probably the remembrance of the objection he had just offered to the instructions of Jesus that caused him to feel such a sense of humility and guilt. Peter must be credited with ability to see his faults, and he had many. But he was always penitent when he felt the force of those faults. This trait in his nature made him the kind of clay that the Master could mold into such a useful vessel. It was here at the side of the Sea of Galilee, while the penitent disciple was in his penitence, that Jesus made the second call to discipleship, saying, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Peter had just made

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a wonderful catch of fish while acting under his Master's instructions. Now, acting under the same instruction, he was to become as successful in catching men. With such an object lesson before him, Peter could not doubt the Master's ability to lead in a larger angling enterprise, so he, with his companions, immediately "forsook all and followed Him." This is the second and permanent call to discipleship.

The third call was the call to apostleship. This call consisted in the separation of twelve men from the body of the disciples and the setting aside of The Twelve for special work. Peter was one of The Twelve, and his name heads the list. This separation to apostleship occurred during the Lord's Galilean ministry, shortly before His delivery of the Sermon on the Mount.

These three steps constitute the process of Peter's elevation to apostleship. A fourth call is sometimes mentioned, the reference being to that time after the resurrection when Jesus, walking again by the Sea of Galilee, said to Peter, "Follow Me." This, however, was more of an incidental instruction than a definite call, and need not, there-

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fore, be considered in a study of Peter's call to apostleship. (John 21:19.)

Scattered along the pathway of this call of Peter to final apostleship there are some striking scenes which emphasize important spiritual truths. It will be profitable to now call attention to them and observe their practical value. The scenes may be appropriately labeled as follows:

First, *an excited brother*. The direct effect of Andrew's discovery of the Christ was an enthusiasm for a like discovery on the part of his brother Simon. Evidently in Andrew's thought nothing that could come into the life of Simon at that time was so important as the discovery of the Christ. The record says that he *first* found his own brother, Simon. Whatever other work there may have been that day for Andrew or his brother, it was all submerged in the supreme purpose of finding the Christ. Peter would not have found Christ that day had it not been for the intense earnestness of his brother Andrew. Perhaps he never would have found Christ had he not found Him that day. Who knows? This spirit of Andrew is the natural birthright of every true Chris-

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tian. He who finds Christ in the fullness of His saving and blessing presence will experience the overflow of altruism which finds its level only in the bringing of another soul to enjoy the same experience. God's method of building up His Kingdom is for the overflow of one soul's delight in finding the Master to sweep another soul into the Kingdom. It is for one Christ-filled life to draw another life which knows not the Christ. If every new convert through the ages had followed the example of Andrew, there would not be an unsaved soul in the world to-day.

Second, *empty boats filled*. Behold the disappointed fishermen on the shore wearied after their long, fruitless toil. The boats are riding lazily on the waves, empty and idle. But see them later weighted to the sinking-point with fish. What had made the difference? Christ had come in the meantime. That was all. The empty boats spake of failure, the full ones of success. The effect of the coming of Christ into life is just that—the turning of failure into success. Life's shore-line is lined with the empty boats that speak of dismal disappointments, and furnish the evidences of manhood and wom-

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anhood squandered fruitlessly. Failure is prevalent. Yet there is not a single empty boat but that could be abundantly filled were Christ admitted into it. The cause of a large amount of worthless living is the conducting of life in the absence of the Christ principles and life. The best guarantee of a successful life is the presence of the Christ in the life with His divine ideals and principles.

Third, *forsaken nets*. The statement is made that when the Master had called the disciples to Himself, with the assurance that they should become fishers of men, that they forsook all and followed Him. Among the things forsaken were their nets, the sign of their craft. Scattered along the shore of the sea were those forsaken implements suggestive of their old vocation. Discarded and forgotten they lay, while their owners followed the advancing Christ. Silent they lay, yet loud in their utterance of spiritual truth. No life can follow Christ in the best sense without a complete forsaking of the former implements of worldliness. A full abandonment of the unrighteous life is necessary. The sin-nets must be left behind. Worldly ambition, selfishness, anger, lust, and the long

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list of kindred evils must be discarded by the sea before the advance with the Savior is possible. Let the follower of Jesus ever remember that there is irrevocable enmity between the world and the Kingdom, and while the former is retained the latter can not be entered.

Fourth, *a fever-smitten home*. One of the first places in which we find Christ, after He leaves the seashore with His disciples, is the home of Peter, in which Peter's mother-in-law lay smitten with a fever. Before Jesus entered the home it was a scene of suffering. Pain and sorrow were there. But a wonderful transformation occurred when Christ entered the home. With striking simplicity and ease Christ relieved the suffering, and the rejoicing woman rose from her bed of sickness to minister unto her guests.

The Talmud recites a magic formula for the curing of such a burning fever as is here mentioned. It advises that an iron knife be tied by a braid of hair to a thornbush, that the verses from Exodus 3:2-5 be repeated, that the thornbush be cut down during the repeating of a stated formula, and the result will be that the virtue engendered thus will



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be transmitted to the afflicted one, and the fever will be healed. The absurdity of this method of cure is in striking contrast with this direct and simple method by which Christ cured sickness in Peter's home. The benefits of Christ's presence are not difficult to receive. No weird, agonizing process has to be endured to receive His blessings. He gives freely and frankly to such as will receive.

But the important point to be observed here is the effect of the coming of Christ into the home. At the presence of Jesus the fever was rebuked and departed like an evil spirit from the suffering body. Disease and suffering vanished, and health and joy came. It was a new home after the coming of Jesus. Thus in the beginning of His ministry the Lord acted the prophecy of His power to transform the home. Nothing is more needed amidst the unrest of modern social life than homes that are made happy and healthful by the presence of Christ. The home is the heart of society. Keep it right and the social blood will be pure. Robert Burns, in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," describes a home in which the father at eventide calls the fam-

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ily around the fireside while he reads from the Word of God and lifts up his voice in prayer. It is the picture of a home in which Christ is enthroned. And the poet, after describing the scene, says, "From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs." It is from such homes as these that the grandeur of any nation springs. Such homes are the guarantee of a safe and sane social and individual life. The presence of Jesus means spiritual health for the nation, for society, for the home, and for the individual.

## CHAPTER II.

### WALKING THE WAVES.

BETWEEN the call of Simon, as noticed in the preceding chapter, and the event which furnished the subject of this chapter, there occurred another event in which Simon Peter was concerned, namely, the healing of Jairus's daughter. The name of Peter is mentioned in connection with this healing as being one of the three chosen friends whom Jesus elected to accompany Him. This fact suggests the nearness of Peter to the Master's heart. He was one of the inner circle of the Master's friends. The incident of the healing, however, is of no great importance in the study of the life of Peter, hence we pass by it, mentioning it only for the sake of chronological order.

The account of Christ's walking on the waves is given in three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John. But the effort of Peter to imitate Christ by attempting himself to walk on the waves is recorded by Mat-

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thew only. For a complete description of the incident it is necessary to draw from all the Gospel accounts.

The event occurred shortly after feeding the five thousand near Bethsaida, on the northeastern side of the Sea of Galilee. The immediate result of Christ's miracle in feeding the five thousand was that the people were aroused to compel Him to become king. To prevent His disciples from participating in that distasteful purpose, Jesus persuaded them to cross over the sea, going either to Bethsaida on the western side, or to Capernaum. He then dismissed the multitude and went alone up into a mountain to pray. Leaving Him alone for a moment in the solitude of the mountain retreat, we will follow the experiences of the disciples.

Obedient to the instructions of Jesus, the disciples began the voyage to the western shore of Galilee. It was evening. The prospect of a safe and pleasant journey was before them. But after they had rowed twenty-five or thirty furlongs, a distance of two and one-half or three miles, a sudden storm arose. It was one of those local squalls so common on the Sea of Galilee. The suddenness of

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this storm suggests some interesting facts concerning this little sea. It is not a large body of water, being something like six miles in width and some sixteen or seventeen miles in length. The sea lies in a deep depression, which is probably volcanic in origin. The surface of the lake is about seven hundred feet below the level of the sea. From the edge of the water a low beach stretches for a short distance. This beach is bordered by mountains which rise to considerable height, some of them reaching as high as two thousand feet. The difference of elevation between the lake and the mountains makes a striking difference in their temperatures. On the lake it is warm and sultry, while on the mountains it is cool and invigorating. This difference in temperature accounts for the sudden squalls. The warm air rising from the lake creates an opening for the cooler air from the mountains to occupy, which it does freely, rushing in sometimes at a terrific rate. Sudden and dangerous storms are the result. It was a storm of this kind that overtook the disciples. It struck them when they were about half way across the lake, and it was evidently severe in its character, for the dis-

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ciples rowed against it until the early morning hours and had made very little progress.

It was while they were in the midst of their toiling against the waves that Christ appeared unto the disciples, walking on the waves. There are two or three explanations given for His appearance at that moment and in that way. It is thought by some that from His elevated position on the mountain-side Jesus could look out over the lake, lying there like a sheet of silver in the moonlight, for such a storm as has been described could occur without clouds blackening the heavens. Looking thus, it is supposed that Christ saw the boat lying like a dark object on the water and making no progress. He therefore went to their relief, walking on the water the distance of two and one-half or three miles. This theory is objectionable because no moonlight would be sufficiently bright to enable Christ to identify His own disciples at such a distance. There were likely other boats on the sea, caught by the storm. At so great a distance it would be next to impossible to distinguish one boat from another even in daylight, much less by moonlight. The theory that Christ came to the disciples be-

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cause He saw from the mountain their distress must be given up.

Another theory is that Jesus prayed in the mountain until the fourth watch, as the account says, by which time it was light enough to see the toiling disciples, and thus observing their helpless condition, Jesus came to their relief. The time indicated in the account would be somewhere between three and six o'clock in the morning. But, assuming that the hour was so late as that, and that it was daylight, the same objection would hold as in the former case. The distance would be too great to distinguish the boat from others.

There is, however, another theory which seems more reasonable. It is that Jesus prayed in the mountain until a late hour, as was His custom, and then, following His original intention, started to Capernaum on foot, walking along the northern shore of the lake. We must remember that He had sent His disciples back by boat, hence He must have intended to make His return journey on foot. The natural route would be along the northern shore. Now, if the map of the Sea of Galilee be studied, it will be

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seen that the disciples, in rowing from their starting-point on the eastern shore and going directly to Capernaum, would not at any time be much more than one-half mile from the northern shore line. Jesus, passing along the shore in the light of the early morning, could see the storm-tossed boat and the toiling disciples. Seeing them thus in their helpless condition, He immediately went to their relief, walking on the waves a distance of one-half mile instead of two or three miles.

Mark tells us that Jesus made as if He would pass by the Disciples. The purpose of this act was evidently to attract attention before advancing directly toward the disciples, thus avoiding some of the fright which might be occasioned if they saw the strange figure bearing directly down upon them. Even as it was they supposed that they had seen an apparition, and cried out in their fear. Their fears were quickly relieved, however, as they heard the familiar voice of the Master sounding above the noise of the waves and saying, "It is I; be not afraid."

The part that Peter played in this incident occurred at this point. He answered the voice of Jesus by saying, "Lord, if it be



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Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.” That “if” sounds like Peter had some doubt as to whether the strange figure were really the Lord. But it must not be so interpreted. Peter had perhaps doubted at first, and imagined he saw a ghost. But now his doubts were vanishing, for he recognized the Master. Some one has said that “if” was the last echo of his doubt. It was as if Peter said, “Lord, since it is Thou and not a ghost, let me come to Thee on the waves?” This request shows the childlike impulsiveness of Peter. The possession of that impulsiveness of nature may have furnished one ground for Christ’s interest in Peter. Impulsiveness is very closely akin to energy, and when rightly controlled by judgment, is a power. Jesus perhaps saw that this element in Peter would become tempered, and after a while be harnessed by the power of the Holy Spirit, as it really was at Pentecost, and that then its possessor would become a most valuable instrument in establishing the Kingdom on earth. And so Jesus reckoned with that impulsiveness as in the present case. He doubtless saw, too, a good opportunity to teach a needed lesson in human helplessness and di-

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vine power. His reply to Peter therefore was, "Come." And so Peter makes the start. He does n't stop to think of the absurdity of his venture, or of the danger involved. His whole thought is fixed on Jesus. And, strange as it may seem, he actually walks a little on the water. (Matt. 14:29.) That concentration of thought on Jesus seems to furnish Peter a bridge above the waves, and on it he walks.

That triumph over nature, however, was exceedingly short. Suddenly a strong gust of wind came sweeping over the crest of the waves. It struck Peter with full force and he became alarmed. For a moment he forgot Jesus and thought of the wind and the danger. The consequence was that he began to sink. The waters rose higher and higher about him, and in his alarm the sinking man cried, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately, or, as the original word implies, in great haste, stretched forth His hand and rescued Peter. Jesus then in addressing Peter gave him a new name, even as He did when He first called him to discipleship. According to the King James translation, Jesus said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

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But literally He said, "Littlefaith, why did you doubt?" The new name He gives Peter is "Littlefaith." Various were the names the Lord gave to this changeable disciple: "Cephas," "Littlefaith," "Satan." Yet in all of these instances Jesus was evidently attempting to reveal to Peter a glimpse of his needy nature. In this instance, having administered the gentle rebuke contained in the name "Littlefaith," Jesus stepped with Peter into the boat, and the storm ceased.

In this strange incident the truth is strikingly presented that the disciple must be utterly dependent upon the Master for power. This was a lesson Peter needed very much to learn. He was inclined to look to himself for the sources of power. Instead of feeling the need of borrowing power from the Master, Peter felt that he had ability to loan. On the night of denial, instead of feeling that he had need of the Lord's assistance, he felt rather that the Lord had need of him, hence Peter even dared to assure the Lord that he would stand by Him to the last. Peter lacked the sense of dependence, and was supplied with an over-amount of self-assurance. He was slow to learn his needs. In the present

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instance, while he had every opportunity of learning the lesson of dependence on the Lord, he learned it poorly, as later events show. However, the fact that he came to learn the lesson at last is evident, for after the experience at Pentecost, Peter did not assume to do any of the work of the Kingdom in his own strength. It was always "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Despite Peter's poor learning of the lesson, it was there. Modern disciples, reading this event in the light of subsequent years, may learn the lesson better than did Peter. Yet the lesson is as poorly learned by many. It surely would be unbecoming for a modern Christian who has failed to learn the lesson to censure Peter for his dullness. The truth stands to-day as evident as it did in the time of the Psalmist and the time of Peter, "Our help cometh from the Lord."

There is an old tradition to the effect that when the Holy Family were making their flight into Egypt, and as they were approaching the city of Heliopolis, a tree which grew near the city and which was supposed to be the seat of a god, bowed its branches to the earth in homage to the infant Christ. Idols

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also fell from their places at the approach of the Holy Babe and lay in broken fragments by the wayside. The evident purpose of the tradition is to present the power of Jesus as the power above all powers. It contains, therefore, a germ of truth. The power of Jesus is supreme. The power the Christian needs to welcome into his life is the power of Christ. The life that is the most satisfactory to itself and the most pleasing to the Master is the one that leans not at all on self, but altogether on Christ. The hand that saved Peter is the one even to-day that gives the best support when the sea is rough or the way dark.

Peter discovered also that the transfer of his attention from Jesus was dangerous. He walked the wave successfully while his eye was fixed on the Master. But when he looked away from Jesus and saw the stormy sea, he was smitten with fear and began to sink.

The transfer of attention from Jesus to the world is always dangerous. As long as the eye of the Christian is fixed on the Master, he is safe. While the Savior is looked to as the life's Guide; while the will of

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Christ is supreme; while the world is forgotten in the fixed purpose of the soul to look to the Lord for guidance, the life can never sink. But let the attention be taken from the Lord and centered on the world; let Christ be obscured and the elements of the carnal life magnified, and the life will surely become engulfed. Ask any of the large and sad army of fallen disciples for the story of their fall, and the answer will be that their decline began when they transferred their gaze from Christ to the world. There is much sound philosophy in the injunction to run with patience the race, *looking*—continually *looking*—unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. The heart sometimes follows the eye spiritually as well as materially.

The safest and happiest life is the one in which Jesus holds the hand. The picture of Jesus and Peter walking hand in hand across the water back to the boat is a suggestive one. Peter's fears are all gone now. There is a smile of assurance on his face, because he is now in league with the Master of the sea. He himself is master of the sea. Master, not because of any virtue he possesses,

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but because Jesus holds his hand. The spiritual application of that picture is inspiring. Safe and victorious is that life which walks hand in hand with our Lord. The path may be rough, the dangers may be many, but with Christ the life may move serenely and triumphantly on. Fears are transformed into smiles, and the sinking life rises to a forward march in company with the King.

There is a beautiful spirit revealed in a prayer Martin Luther once uttered. He said: "O, my most dear God, I thank Thee that Thou hast made me poor and a beggar upon earth. O God, punish me rather with pestilence, terrible sickness, with war, with anything rather than that Thou *be silent unto me.*" The longing of the good man's soul was that the Lord should be consciously near unto him; that as the Lord walked with Peter across the waves, so He should walk ever at his side. The troubled but trustful reformer knew the value of that companionship. Its absence would be worse than pestilence or sickness. Likewise, the concern of every Christian should be that the Lord be not absent from him. His prayer should be that the Lord *be not silent* unto him.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DIVINE CONFESSION.

THE life of St. Peter is so closely connected with the life of Christ that in studying the former we must frequently refer to the latter. In the scene described in the last chapter, Jesus was in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. Shortly after performing the miracle of walking the waves, Jesus took a journey northward into a country He had not visited up to this time. This journey is known as the first northern journey for retirement. It was during this visit that the Syrophœnician's daughter was healed. The visit seems to have been of short duration, for we soon find Jesus returning to the Sea of Galilee, passing through Decapolis. He probably returned by way of the eastern Bethsaida, as it was about this time in His public ministry that we find Him healing the blind man near Bethsaida, and feeding the multitude of four thousand in the same vicinity.

From these events, however, Jesus turned



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again to northern Galilee, going, as Matthew says, into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi. This is known as the second northern journey for retirement. It was in the neighborhood of Cæsarea Philippi that the event discussed in this chapter occurred, namely, Peter's confession of his faith in the divinity of Christ.

The purpose of Jesus in taking this journey to the north was probably to avoid the dangers and inconveniences arising from His miraculous ministry in Galilee. The bloody hand of Herod, which had caused the death of John the Baptist, was now seeking His life. The Sadducees and Pharisees were becoming annoying in their persecutions. They had just demanded a sign from Jesus, which He had refused to give, and His enemies were therefore saying that He was not able to give proof of His Messiahship. It is probable, too, that within the circle of His own disciples a little discontent had begun to arise. They had expected Christ to become king, and yet only a short time before, when the multitude had desired to declare Jesus king, He had refused and seemed almost grieved at the suggestion. It was natural that His dis-

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ciples should be a little discouraged. If the truth could be known, we would probably find that the shaking of the faith of Judas and the beginning of his apostasy dated from these troubled days and seemingly unhappy experiences of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee. With such conditions confronting Him, it was natural that Jesus should desire to withdraw with His disciples, leaving behind the multitudes and the enemies, and seek a quiet spot where He could commune with the Father and instruct His chosen followers as to the crisis of suffering and death toward which He must soon proceed. Hence He sought one of nature's most quiet retreats, where the chief spectators would be the mountains and the forest trees. The spot selected was in the neighborhood of Mt. Hermon, one of the most picturesque regions found in all Palestine. It was here that Peter made his confession of faith in the divinity of Jesus.

The path which Jesus and His companions must have traveled leads, as we are told, over "an unwonted carpet of turf, through trees of every variety of foliage, through a park-like verdure," until the snow-covered

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top of Mt. Hermon appears. The snowy top is gradually shut from view by its approaching nearness. The rush of waters is heard as they leap down the mountain side and off into the valley. Soon an ancient Roman town looms up on the mountain side, lying amid groves of olive trees. This is Cæsarea Philippi, which in the time of Jesus was a thriving little city. Close to this town the mountain side forms a solid wall of stone—a rocky cliff. From a depression or cave beneath this rocky wall there issue many little streams, which collect into a basin and form a larger stream, which as it flows on widens into the famous Jordan River. The cave in the rocky wall just mentioned is the upper source of the Jordan. It was near the base of this quiet Mt. Hermon, where no sound save the murmuring of the waters and the singing of the birds could disturb Him, that Jesus led His disciples and put to them the questions concerning His Divine Sonship. (Matt. 16:13-20.)

The question proposed first by Jesus was, “Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” The conversation which follows reveals clearly the opinion of the public con-

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cerning Jesus. If the question arises as to why Jesus put this question to His disciples, the answer, in part at least, would be that He desired to call their attention to the prejudiced opinion the public held of Him, and in the face of that false opinion to test the opinion held by the disciples, and if possible, strengthen them in the true view. The faith in the hearts of the disciples that Jesus was really the Son of God would mean much in strengthening the devotion of the disciples in that time of crisis. He was just about to reveal to the disciples something of His approaching suffering and death, and He desired them to be thoroughly grounded in the faith of His divinity before He revealed to them those coming calamities which might further disturb their already troubled minds. So the question is put touching the public's view of His divinity. The answer to His question was, "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some Elias, and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." The answer showed that the opinion of the public was at least complimentary. The public did not think Jesus was actually one of the great men named, but that He was a great person such as

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they had been. Just as when we hear a great orator we say, "Another Demosthenes has arisen," so they were saying, "Another John the Baptist, Elias, or Jeremias has arisen." The largeness of the compliment is seen when we recall in what great prominence these names were held among the Jews. The public estimated Jesus highly, but they had not risen to the lofty conception that He was the Messiah. It was to this higher conception, however, that Jesus desired to lead the disciples, hence He asked the second question, which provoked Peter's opinion of Jesus.

This second question was, "Who say ye that I am?" The emphasis is thrown upon the word "ye." Jesus wanted to draw a contrast between the opinion of His disciples and the opinion of the public. It may be supposed, too, that Jesus was exercising something of a personal element in asking this question. He would emphasize the fact of His Sonship, certainly. But aside from that, He would enjoy the personal satisfaction of hearing from the lips of His disciples a confession of His greatness, which was denied Him by the public. Link this personal element with the desire of Jesus to have His

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disciples thoroughly grounded in the faith of His divinity before the final crisis came, and the motive of the Master becomes apparent.

In answer to this second question came the divine confession from the lips of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In this statement we see Peter at his best. He seems to rise for a moment above his other self as Mt. Hermon arose in snow-capped grandeur above the common hills. Peter was a mixture of good and bad, of strength and weakness. We saw his littleness as he was sinking helplessly beneath the waves, crying for help. We here see his bigness as he stands spokesman for the disciples and Church, and makes the first recorded confession of the divinity of Jesus. The confession appears the grander when we recall the fact that it was made in the face of an opposite public opinion, and in spite of the wavering faith of some of the disciples. Peter frequently went with the crowd, but here he stands opposed to the crowd, and alone stays the tide of criticism and doubt.

The content of this confession is deeply significant. Peter confessed to the Messiahship of Jesus. But that was not all. The

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Jews looked for a Messiah who should be merely a man endowed with unusual gifts. Peter declares Jesus such a Messiah, but more. He is the Son of God. In short, Peter's confession went not only past public opinion, but past the Jewish expectation, and declared Christ divine.

There can be no doubt of the fact that Jesus appreciated this opinion of Peter. His actions showed it. He immediately gave a benediction and a promise of reward.

The benediction consisted in the utterance, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, by My Father which is in heaven." Peter was fortunate or blessed in that he had learned that Jesus was the Son of God, but he was fortunate also because that truth had been revealed to him from a divine source. The expression "flesh and blood" is used here to designate the human source of knowledge in contrast with the divine. Peter had not learned his lesson from any human source, but from God. In spite of his imperfections, Peter had advanced sufficiently in his association with Jesus to be able to receive impressions from divine sources. His

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experience would seem to indicate that faith in Christ as the Son of God flourishes best in that life that is open to the impressions from divine sources.

The promise of reward referred to above was given in the words of Jesus, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I build My Church." The word Peter in the original is "petros," which means rock or a piece of rock. When Jesus first called Peter, He said to him, "Thou art Simon; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a rock." Here that prophecy is fulfilled and Peter becomes the rock. Literally, Jesus said, "Thou art rock, and upon this rock I build My Church."

What rock? Jesus did not mean the *man* Peter, but rather the truth which the man had uttered, namely, that Christ was the Son of God. In the thought of Jesus the truth is personified and becomes identical with the man. For present purposes they are one. The truth and the man are so much one that Jesus can say to this man, "Thou art truth—the rock truth—and upon you I build My Church." The rock truth which Peter for the time being personified was the divinity



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of Jesus. That truth stands as the foundation rock upon which the Christian Church is built. Any theory that denies the divinity of our Lord is a blow struck at the very foundation of the Church. Jesus was saying to Peter in substance, "You have within you the truth of My divinity. That truth is the foundation rock of My Church. I therefore call you the possessor of that truth 'rock,' and upon that rock truth I build My Church."

Jesus also added, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This is the first recorded utterance of Jesus concerning His Church. In it He suggests the permanency of the Church. The term "hell" is used here in the sense of the abode of death and destruction rather than a place of punishment. The thought of Jesus, therefore, is that all the combined forces of death and destruction shall not be sufficient to overthrow His Church. This is a bold assertion, especially since it was made in the face of a severe criticism and at a time when opposition was violent and the faith of the disciples wavering. But the testimony of history has sanctioned that assertion, and incidentally lent color to

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the claim of the Speaker that He was divine. Else how could He have foreseen the outcome?

Another feature of the reward that came from Peter's confession was the promise of Jesus that into his hands He would commit the keys of the Kingdom. (Matt. 16:19.) The key was the badge of authority. The authority herein committed to Peter was given not because of any human qualifications to receive it, but rather because of the diviner qualifications in the presence of the Father just evidenced, and the faith just expressed. The scope of the authority granted is seen in the expression, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The terms *bind* and *loose* are used in the sense of *prohibit* and *permit*. The meaning is that whatsoever Peter prohibited or permitted in the Church was to receive the sanction of heaven. Let it not be presumed that this clothing with authority constituted Peter dictator of heaven so that whatever he commanded heaven obeyed. The meaning is rather that Peter was to be controlled so much by heaven

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that his actions would be the outgoing of heaven's dictation. He and heaven were to be in harmony, so that whatever he did was to be heaven's doing through him. Whatever he prohibited or permitted on earth was to be prohibited or permitted in heaven because their wills were one. The authority given Peter was merely that which constituted him in harmony with the will of God and made him able to express that will. It did not in any sense vest him with arbitrary power to forgive sin, as some would have us believe. The main thought, however, to be emphasized in this connection is that it was Peter who stood as the first confessor of the fundamental doctrine of the Church that Christ is divine, and that the confession itself was such an important one that it drew from the Master a benediction and a gracious promise of reward.

One can hardly study this incident without being impressed with the thought that a confession of Christ openly and frankly made is a satisfaction to the Master Himself. Jesus was pleased with this confession of Peter. If in that far-away day such a confession was pleasing, it must be certainly

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so in this day when there is so much forgetfulness of the Master, and when He is put to a new shame by His own followers and crucified by the world again and again. Christ expects His true followers to be willing to confess Him not only as the Son of God, but as their personal Savior. The tendency to shrink from that confession is not only displeasing to the Lord, but detrimental to the disciple. There is a new spear-thrust for the Savior in every spirit akin to that possessed by the Brooklyn merchant who went to his pastor to inquire if Jesus Christ would be willing to take him into His concern—the Kingdom—as a silent partner. The minister said, “Why do you ask?” The merchant replied, “Because I wish to be a member of His concern, but do not want anybody to know it.” The good pastor taught the right doctrine when he replied: “Jesus Christ takes no silent partners. The firm must be Christ & Co., and the names of the company must all be written out on the sign-board.” Jesus craves the fellowship of those who can say with Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and then add, as the Earl of Shaftesbury used to add

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in talking to his Ragged School boys, "My Savior."

It is implied in this incident that the keys to the Kingdom's benedictions are received upon the grounds of faith and confession. Faith born of the presence of God and confession born of the will of man are the two hands into which the keys of the Kingdom are placed. The keys signify the liberty and power of enjoying the blessings of the Kingdom. Every clerk in a commercial establishment will remember the day when for the first time the proprietor placed in his hands the key to the establishment, and told him to come and go as he pleased. It meant that all the proprietor had was entrusted to the clerk. But in a larger sense God gives to His worthy ones the keys of the Kingdom. To those of us who can be trusted He throws wide open the doors. All He has is not merely entrusted to us, but *is ours*—ours to use and enjoy. He bids us come in and go out and possess as we please. A spiritual Cræsus does that one become whose faith and confession have wrung from the hand of God the keys to the Kingdom.

Coleridge and Charles Lamb were once in

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conversation when the former said, "I think, Charles, you have never heard me preach." And Lamb replied, "My dear boy, I never heard you do anything else." It would be difficult to pay to any man a higher compliment than that. The very life a perpetual sermon! And yet the life that is a daily sermon is possible to every one who by a confessed faith in Christ as the Son of God, gets the keys to the Kingdom, unlocks its treasures, and by the hand of love scatters those treasures through a needy world.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRANSFIGURATION.

PETER manifested a sublime faith when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But it was only a momentary faith. It had been preceded by doubts, and came to mark the high tide of faith. It was to be followed by an ebb-tide. There was soon to be a lowering of both faith and spirits on the part of Peter and some of his companions. The evidence of that waning faith is seen in an incident which almost immediately followed the confession of Peter. Jesus, having strengthened the disciples in the faith of His Messiahship, began to acquaint them with the fact of His approaching death. Such a fate was so inconsistent with the idea of His Messiahship as held by the disciples that they could not accept His words. They chose rather to believe that the Master in foretelling His passion was merely giving expression to some gloomy thoughts born in an hour of dark moodiness. They be-

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lieved such a fate impossible to their Leader. So, feeling that they were right and that Jesus was wrong, Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him by saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." Peter meant his words to be a consolation to the Lord, but they were poorly applied. Perhaps we see here an effect of Peter's exaltation a short time before. Some people are unbalanced by unusual honor or success. Peter was subject to that failing. He seems here to be so lifted up by his recent honor that he usurps an unwarranted position and assumes to become dictator to the Son of God. In so exalting himself Peter overreached the mark. His exaltation in being granted the keys of the Kingdom was an honor which almost unbalanced him. Jesus had given him an inch, and he had taken a mile. Jesus had only offered him the keys, and he assumed proprietorship. There was, therefore, need for a puncturing of his pride and the teaching of a lesson in humility. Hence, while shortly before Jesus had spoken to Peter the most flattering words he had ever heard, now He gives him the most scathing denunciation he ever received:



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“Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

An hour or so before Jesus had called Peter the foundation of the Church. Now he is “Satan” and an “offense.” An hour ago he was a rock to build on. Now he is a rock of offense. The term “savored” is used here in the sense of “to think” or “to mind.” Literally, the Lord is saying, “Thou thinkest not upon the things that be of God, but the things that be of man.” The logic of the Lord’s declaration is that the mind that is absorbed in the affairs of men, while it forgets the interests of God, is more Satanic than divine.

This rebuke of Jesus had the effect of humbling the proud spirit of Peter, and of making serious the thought of the other disciples. While shortly before they were walking the mountain top of exaltation, now they were in the valley of humiliation. Observe their position. They were in a strange, solitary place with the Master, who had just given a stinging rebuke. They had no future to anticipate except one darkened by the

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prospect of suffering and death of their Master; no prospect for themselves except that of contempt and reproach from their friends when at last they should become as scattered sheep without a Shepherd. It was a discouraging situation, to say the least. As we often say, however, the darkest hours are just before daybreak. After the storm comes the sunshine. So it was in the case of the disciples at this time. Soon their clouds were to break away and the brightest sun of all their experience was to shine upon them in the scene of the transfiguration.

We will study the event of the transfiguration as it is recorded in the gospel according to St. Matthew. (Chap. 17.) The scene of "The Divine Confession" was near Cæsarea Philippi, close to the base of Mt. Hermon, in one of nature's quietest halls. The scene of the present event is in the same locality, but on the mountain side instead of at the base. The account speaks of a high mountain apart into which Jesus and the disciples went. Mt. Hermon answers to this description as no other mountain in this locality. Mt. Hermon is an elevation which is more of a mountain range than a single

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peak. There are three distinct peaks presented. Two of them are close together and in a line running north and south, while the third lies off to the west, separated from the two by a deep valley. These peaks are the tallest in Palestine, rising more than nine thousand feet above the sea level. One feature connected with Mt. Hermon will make it easily remembered. It casts the most remarkable shadow to be seen anywhere in the world. When the evening sun begins to approach the horizon in the west, the shadow of the mountain top begins to creep slowly down the mountain side. It reaches the base and travels across the plain toward the east, wrapping the city of Damascus in its shadow as it goes. The shadow moves on until it reaches the eastern horizon and then creeps up the side of the sky until the pointed shadow of the mountain top is plainly seen against the sky. Over seventy miles of plain the shadow stretches itself, and then lifts its head above the eastern horizon.

It was evening when Jesus and His disciples ascended the slope of Hermon. They could doubtless see the shadow as it moved on like a mighty tide across the plain. Jesus

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could strengthen the faith of His disciples by telling them that the Kingdom He came to found would rise higher than the top of old Mt. Hermon, and that its shadow, like the one just creeping across the plain, would move on and on until the whole earth would be enfolded within it and the point of the shadow rise up to touch the very throne of the Father in heaven.

With such scenes before them, and perhaps with such thoughts as these in their minds, Jesus and His disciples move toward the mountain top until the whole land is wrapped in the shadow of the night and the stars come out in the blue sky and twinkle above in true Oriental brilliancy. A quiet spot is found, and there the Lord begins to pray. Luke tells us that He went up into the mountain to pray. This was His purpose.

After six days of gloom following the conversation described in the last chapter, the disciples were to see the brightest picture of their lives. They had been in the valley long enough. Now Christ would exalt them and from the mountain top give them a glimpse of another world. How skillfully our clouds are removed and our needs sup-

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plied by the wisdom of God! He never lets His children suffer beyond what they are able to endure, and follows the dark days with brighter ones. We all have our "six days;" our periods of loneliness, sorrow, and defeat. But we have the right to look to the after-time when God shall more than atone for all the darkness. We do not know how long the "six days" will be, but there is a transfiguration at the end. And if the transformation be even delayed to the end of life's journey, it will come. And as the old life of darkness slips off and we pass into the light of the new life, we will know what Paul meant when he said, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed."

"Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John." This was Christ's triangle of friendship. On three different occasions He is recorded as taking Peter, James, and John. It was a triangle of friendship composed of characters strikingly different. John is known as the gentle, loving disciple. Peter was of the fiery, impulsive nature. James is considered as of the reliable, businesslike type. The

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characters in Christ's triangle of friendship ranged, therefore, from the calm to the tempest. This fact is not without its significance. It is a hint as to what the Church of Christ should be. The Church is to be composed of opposite natures, and yet all are to be blended into a harmonious unit. Unity in diversity is the characteristic of the Church. In no other institution among men can characters of such conflicting elements be blended into such a harmonious whole. Such harmony is possible only on that basis which is peculiar to the Church, namely, brotherly love. Love is the only tie that can bind conflicting differences into perfect harmony.

Having taken His triangle of friendship into the mountain apart, the account tells that Jesus was *transfigured* before them. The meaning of the term "transfigured" is a question which has been much debated. Many explanations have been offered from both the physical and spiritual standpoints. Without attempting to explain all the mystery connected with this phenomenon, it is safe to assume that in His communion with the Heavenly Father, the spiritual nature of Jesus was so intensified that it manifested

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itself through the physical until His face was made to shine as the sun and His garments became bright and glistening.

The purpose of such an exhibition of divine power is not difficult to imagine. Jesus Himself was in need of strength for the approaching ordeal of Gethsemane and Calvary, and that inflow of divine influence would be to Him like the whispering of a voice from another world encouraging Him to be brave. As for the disciples, who were soon to be Shepherdless, this mountain scene would stand as a constant inspiration in their hours of trial. There are times when the earth needs to feel the touch of heaven and hear the Voice celestial. Such was the need in the present case, and the answer came in the form of the transfiguration scene on the side of Mt. Hermon.

“There appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.” These were divine visitors sent by divine authority upon a divine mission. It was a mission of helpfulness. These divine messengers had long been with the Father, the one fourteen hundred and the other nine hundred years. They were well equipped to carry a message from

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heaven to earth. It must have been an inspiration to see them and talk with them. Interesting to us to-day would it be to know the substance of the conversation carried on between the Lord and the heavenly visitors. Luke has given us a hint of it by suggesting what the theme was in part at least. Luke says they spoke of "His decease." (Luke 9:13.) It would seem that these two messengers were just the ones of all the inhabitants of heaven to talk with Jesus upon that particular subject. There was no one upon earth with whom Jesus could satisfactorily discuss that subject. He had just tried it with His disciples with unpleasant results. Gladly, therefore, would the Lord welcome the visitors from the other world to talk with them of His decease (literally, "exodus"). The theme would be one of mutual interest, for the decease had been the most remarkable event in the lives of both Moses and Elias, as it was to be with Jesus. Moses could tell Jesus how in Nebo's lonely mountain God's hand had rocked him to sleep in death and carried him to the eternal home. Elias could tell Him how in that quiet spot in Gilead the chariot of God had come for him and carried



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him away, leaving the weeping Elisha to carry on his work. And both could tell Jesus how much more glorious His decease would be than theirs; how in the ages to come Nebo would grow more lonely, and Gilead would be forgotten, as the cross of Calvary grew larger and larger and the thought of humanity became more and more centered upon it. They could tell Jesus that not a soul would enter the Kingdom by passing over Nebo or through Gilead, but long processions of toiling generations coming after Him would enter the Kingdom by passing through Gethsemane and Calvary; that in the ages to come the hosts of heaven would forget Moses and Elias as they prostrated themselves at the feet of Christ, confessing Him as Lord because He had made His exodus by the cross.

But as the conversation proceeded, Peter interrupted it with a strange expression, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." Mark says Peter knew not what he said, and Mark deserves thanks for the apology. It was a presumptuous interruption at least.

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Here again we see the unreasoning, impulsive nature of Peter. Though a divine conversation were in progress, he must get into it some way. It was his childlike disposition to be a part of everything he saw or heard.

While Peter knew not what he said, his remark revealed the uppermost thought of his mind. He wanted the heavenly visitors to remain. He would build dwelling-places for them. More, it would be delightful for him to live up there on the mountain side in such company, far away from the sinful world. Peter's thought was a forerunner of the monastic idea which later became prominent in the Church. This incident may be said to mark the birth of that monastic idea. Peter would build a monastery on the mountain side and live in a heavenly atmosphere. He would live apart from the needy world and spend his days listening to the words of the celestial visitors, Moses and Elias.

But hardly had Peter's dazed thought framed itself into words when a scathing rebuke fell from the skies. It was the voice of God saying, "This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him." It was as if the voice of God said: "Peter, you need not long to hear My

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messengers talking of heavenly things. You have with you One greater than Moses or Elias. You have My Son. Hear Him. Hear Him as He tells you that your sphere is not on the mountain side with heavenly visitors, but in the valley among needy men. Hear Him as He tells you of the stern duties of life. Hear Him as He sends you out among men to serve them and, like Himself, die for them." And as Peter stands wondering at the meaning of it all, a sudden fear seizes him, with the rest of the witnesses, and they throw themselves on the earth, hiding their faces against the cool mountain sod. But at the touch of Jesus their fears are quieted and they rise to learn that the strange visitors are gone and they are alone in the mountain stillness. In silence they move down the mountain side, wondering at what they have seen and heard, but confident that they have as their companion the Son of God—the link between earth and heaven. And this was the lesson of all lessons they needed at that particular time.

The circumstances connected with this scene are suggestive of at least two valuable truths:

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1. For every hour of trial there is a voice of consolation from a divine source. These voices from heaven came to Jesus when He most needed them. It was an hour of trial for Him inasmuch as Gethsemane and Calvary were looming up in the distance, and the burden He was bearing was becoming constantly heavier. God will never permit His children to be tried too sorely, but with the trial send some consolation. In every hour of discouragement His voice will whisper its message, and fortunate is that one who has an ear to hear the voice. With every trial there is a possible transfiguration.

2. The Christian mission is not to live apart from the world in pious inactivity, but rather to go into the world of toil and suffering and help bear a brother's burden. The Christian is not called to believe and to enjoy merely, but to serve as well. One of the greatest epitomes of the life of Jesus is that statement which says He went about doing good. Our actual doing of good, as well as our being good, is pleasing to the Father. A great man once said, in speaking of the unlettered Moody and the scholarly Canon Liddon, "Moody will *do* more in an

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hour than Canon Liddon in a century." That was a noble tribute to the value of service. The tribute of having rendered worthy service is one every Christian ought to covet. The Christian aim ought to be to give much of fruitful service to the world, remembering that the Lord Himself said, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

## CHAPTER V.

### LESSONS FROM THE TEACHER.

#### (a) A LESSON ON GIVING OFFENSE.

AFTER the scene of the transfiguration described in the last chapter, Jesus and the three disciples slowly descended Mt. Hermon, Jesus instructing the three that what they had witnessed should be told to no man. It was probably early morning when this little company reached the rest of the disciples, who had remained at the base of the mountain. Luke says it was the "next day." A crowd of people had collected about the disciples. When the people saw Jesus they ran to Him and saluted Him as a conquering King. Among the people was a father who had brought a demoniac child to the disciples to have him healed. The disciples had attempted a cure, but had made a dismal failure. The father, therefore, brought the child to Jesus that He might make him whole. Jesus thrust the evil spirit from the child as easily as He would brush the dust from a

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disciple's cloak. A significant thing in connection with this healing is the fact that Jesus passed directly from communion to service; from prayer to action. In the mountain He prayed; at its base He served. The Christian life is not one of communion merely, but of action as well. The value of the communion lies in the fact that it prepares the better for service.

From the scene of healing the child, Jesus turned to begin the journey southward toward Capernaum. The most prominent event occurring on the journey was a dispute among the disciples concerning the question as to who should be greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. This spirit of contention was soundly rebuked by the Master, who after entering into one of the Capernaum homes, took a little child up in His arms and said to the disciples, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven." The inference is that while they held the spirit just displayed they were not ready for admission into the Kingdom of heaven, much less prepared for holding an exalted position therein. It was while in the city of Caper-

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naum on this visit that Jesus taught the lesson on giving offense. (Matt. 17:24-27.) This lesson we now notice.

The incident which furnished the opportunity for the lesson is recorded by Matthew only. That fact is suggestive inasmuch as the incident involved the payment of tribute money, which would be a matter of interest to Matthew, who was a tax collector. This incident concerning the payment of tribute seems to have made a deeper impression on him than on others, and naturally so.

The collectors of taxes in Capernaum came to Peter and asked him if his Master paid tribute money. The fact that the question was addressed to Peter shows the prominence in which he was held by those even outside the disciples. He was recognized as a leader, and it was supposed that if any one could answer the question proposed, Peter could.

The tribute money referred to in the question was doubtless the annual tax of a half-shekel which was expected of the temple worshipers. In the Revised Version the expression is translated, "they that received the half-shekel." According to an old cus-



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tom among the Jews, which custom had its origin in a command of Moses, every male Jew above twenty years of age was expected to pay an annual tribute of a half-shekel, an amount equal to about thirty cents. This money was applied to the paying of the expenses of the temple worship. The payment of the tax was not obligatory, and yet it was honorable, and all who expected to stand in favor with their fellows paid it. The tax collectors of Capernaum were wondering what the attitude of Jesus would be toward the payment of this tax. Would He disregard the letter of the Mosaic law? They knew how Jesus emphasized the spirit of the law rather than the letter. Would He disregard the custom concerning the tribute money? In order to have their question answered they came to Peter and asked him if his Master paid the temple tax. Peter without hesitation answered in the affirmative. Some critics think that Peter answered thus hastily, not because he knew the facts in the case, but because he feared the odium that might attach to Jesus if it became known that He did not pay the temple tax. This interpretation would, of course, imply fabrication

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on the part of Peter. It is not necessary, however, to thus question his sincerity. Let us give the erring man all the credit we can. He probably knew that Jesus had formerly paid the tax, so when the question was asked he was ready with the answer. Peter probably thought no more about the incident until he came into the house where Jesus was, and was surprised by a question put by the Lord which showed that Jesus knew of the conversation which had taken place. The question was, "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children or of strangers?" Notice the use of the term "Simon." It is no longer "Satan," the term of rebuke. Neither is it the prophetic term, "rock." It is the affectionate term, "Simon." Jesus had a wonderful aptness in adapting Himself to conditions. When the stern rebuke was needed He could give it. Here, when He would come close to a disciple's heart and teach an important lesson, He prepares the way for the reception of the truth by giving a loving address.

Peter answered the question by saying that the kings of the earth exact tribute of

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strangers and not their own children. Jesus made the strange reply, "Then are the children free." The meaning of Jesus evidently was that the Father in heaven was the King, and that He Himself was a Child or Son. Being a Son, he was free; or, in other words, was not obliged to pay tribute. It was as if the Master said: "I am the Son of God; the temple is My Father's house. He exacts tribute of strangers to pay its expenses, but the Son is freed from payment, just as in an earthly kingdom the king exacts tribute of strangers while the children are free." It looked thus far as if Jesus was contradicting the answer Peter had given the tax-gatherers. He was denying that it was necessary for Him to pay tribute. But the reply of Jesus was not yet completed. There was a "nevertheless" attached which explained His meaning. "Lest we should offend them, go . . . and give unto them for Me and thee." By these words the Lord was declaring that He was ready to do something He was not obliged to do lest He might offend a brother. We begin to see the lesson that Jesus would teach Peter. It was the need of self-denial in order to avoid offense. The lesson was

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taught in a tangible way. Peter was sent to the sea to catch a fish, in the mouth of which a shekel was found, and with it the tax of both Peter and Jesus was paid.

The incident was an object lesson teaching the truth that the true Christian spirit is one that limits self for the sake of others. The Christian is to be ready to sacrifice some natural rights and privileges that others be not offended. It is unchristian for a person to do everything he has a right to do if in the doing there is danger to another soul. The force of this lesson as applied to daily life may be seen by stating its truth in both the positive and negative form.

Positively stated, it means that the Christ-spirit does things that are not absolutely necessary for the sake of others. For example, we sometimes hear people say that it is not necessary for them to attend religious services, for they can live a Christian life without so doing. Now, granting that the statement is true (though it is to be seriously questioned), how about the effect on the weaker brother? There are struggling souls that need sadly the helps of divine worship, and the example of absence on the part

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of a stronger brother may be very damaging to them. The Christ-spirit says to be careful lest we offend. This principle may be applied likewise to Church membership, Church work, the habit of prayer, giving liberally, and to many other practices of the religious life. The Christian spirit will do for the sake of others some things that are not essential so far as self is concerned.

Negatively stated, this truth means that the Christ-spirit refrains from doing some things for the sake of others, even though the self might enjoy those things. The question of the Christ-spirit is not merely what is *right* for self, but also what is *safe* for others. The individual may have a right to do some things so far as his own life is concerned which he has no right to do so far as some other lives are concerned. A Christian should refrain from doing those things which may be harmful to others, though they may mean no harm to himself. The expression of Jesus is a good one to hold in mind as we measure conduct—"lest we offend." This rule applied to the problem of questionable amusements, will settle many difficulties. The Christian perspective must be wide

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enough to include the welfare of the brother as well as the pleasure of self.

### (b) A LESSON ON FORGIVENESS.

While yet in the house in Capernaum, Jesus taught Peter another lesson, this time on the subject of forgiveness. It was one of a series of lessons illustrative of the spirit the true follower of Jesus Christ should possess. The lesson on giving offense had been followed by one on the need of possessing the childlike spirit. Then came the lesson on forgiveness, which we now notice. (Matt. 18:15.)

Jesus began the lesson by saying, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." This instruction was unusual. The rabbis taught that if one offended another, the offending one should approach the offended and make the matter right. This, too, is the thought of the world to-day. But Jesus went a step further. He taught that the offended one should, if necessary, approach the offender for the sake of harmony. This was a broader spirit than the average Jew had been accustomed to manifest. It meant that har-

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mony and the spirit of brotherly love were worth more than that pride which refuses to sue for peace.

But Jesus further described to Peter how the offended should deal with the offender. The first step, as we have seen, was that he should be spoken to in private. Secondly, he should be approached in the presence of two or three witnesses. Thirdly, if he still be unreconciled, the matter should be brought to the Church. Then, if he still refuses to be reconciled, let him become as a stranger. The evident meaning of Jesus is that the Christian spirit does everything within the bounds of possibility to preserve peace and harmony. Nothing can limit the effort of the Christ-spirit toward peace save the absolute refusal of the offender to be reconciled. The inference is, however, that such a refusal may sometimes come. When that time comes, the Christian has gone as far as he needs to go. He has done his full duty. Nor need he feel condemned if an estrangement still exists. He has done all, and is clear. The responsibility is with the other party.

Peter heard these words of Jesus. He pondered them. He seemed to think that he

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saw the point and had learned the lesson. He saw that the spirit of forgiveness must be broader than he had formerly thought. So, like a child who thinks he has learned a lesson when he has only half learned it, Peter approached Jesus and began to parade his supposed learning. You may have seen a child learning to count ten. He received instruction for a few moments, supposed he had learned the lesson perfectly, then ran to some one to exhibit the new knowledge, saying, "Listen to me count ten." Then he began, "One, two, three,—" then stammered and hesitated, and finally in sheer desperation rushed to the end of the task by adding, "eight, seven, five, ten." And he closed trying to make himself and others believe he had done a good job. In much that same way Peter came to Jesus. He began his display by saying, "How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?" Then he attempted to answer his own question by saying, "Till seven times?" In this remark Peter reveals a little advancement after all. The teaching of the rabbis was that one should not forgive another more than three times, and the actual practice was even below



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that standard. Peter had enlarged his conception considerably, and thought he was doing remarkably well to rise from three to seven times. Yet the fact that he had really learned very little of the lesson was revealed in the reply of Jesus, "I say not . . . seven times; but seventy times seven." How narrow the spirit of Peter looked in comparison with that broad spirit revealed in the answer of Jesus! Travelers discover that the real height of a mountain is appreciated only by comparison. High mountains often appear low, and low ones high, until a comparison with others is made, when the true height appears. Had Peter stood entirely alone when he made his statement of "seven times" he would have looked tall. But when he was measured against the "seventy times seven" of Jesus, he looked small.

Jesus did not mean to teach that one should forgive another just four hundred and ninety times. He meant, rather, that there should be no limit to one's willingness to forgive, save the brother's unwillingness to be forgiven. It is the *spirit* of forgiveness that Jesus would emphasize. That spirit should abound and be inexhaustible.

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The relation of the spirit of forgiveness to salvation is taught by Jesus in a parable which He immediately gives. In it He suggests that the spirit of forgiveness is essential to final salvation. The parable pictures the fate of a servant who was forgiven a debt of something like fourteen million dollars, and who afterward refused to forgive a debt of some seventeen dollars owed him by another. This contrast in forgiveness represents the difference between God's forgiveness and man's. Man is the wicked servant, who, though forgiven much, refuses to forgive another. The *fate* of the wicked servant in the parable was that he was despised of his master and delivered over to prison. Jesus, in drawing the moral, says, "So likewise shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." The evident meaning is that we can not be forgiven of God unless we have the spirit of forgiveness toward our brothers. This is a thoroughly natural conclusion, as may be seen by looking the case squarely in the face. The forgiveness of God is not received by the one who is unforgiving, simply because God *can*

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*not* forgive such an one. Unforgiveness is sin. God can not forgive sin which is deliberately retained. While sin is persisted in it can not be forgiven. It is only when sin is *forsaken* that forgiveness can be offered of God. If we retain hatred and unforgiveness, we must stand self-condemned and unforgiven before God.

These lessons afford a glimpse of the broadness and beauty of the Christian spirit. It is more than ordinary. It is peculiar. We must as Christians avoid giving offense, and if offended, be the first to sue for peace. We must be as humble in spirit as a child. We must possess an inexhaustible spirit of forgiveness. In a word, we are to have the spirit of Jesus. The elements of the Christian life reflected outwardly are the results of the Christ-spirit enthroned within. The true outer life can not long exist unless the true spirit dwells within. The thistle can not produce the beauty and fragrance of the rose because it has not the rose life dwelling within. But it is no task for the rose to produce the beauty and fragrance, for it has the life within of which these are the natural outcome. So the one who has not the spirit

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of the Master can not easily reflect the Christ-life, but where the spirit is within the life comes naturally. It should be the aim of every Christian, therefore, to reach a position where, laying aside anger, malice, strife, and all uncleanness, he can say with Paul that sentence which is the mightiest testimony of the disciple of Jesus, "Christ liveth in me."

## CHAPTER VI.

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#### (c) A LESSON ON REWARD OF SERVICE.

AFTER teaching the lesson on forgiveness recorded in the last chapter, Jesus departed from Capernaum and from Galilee to return no more until after His crucifixion and resurrection. In company with His disciples, He began a slow journey toward Jerusalem, passing along the eastern borders of Jordan, through Perea, and finally crossing Jordan for a visit in Bethany, where He enjoyed the hospitality of the home of Mary and Martha. The remainder of the life of Jesus prior to the crucifixion was spent in the vicinity of Jerusalem; He visited the city several times, and several times withdrew for safety or seclusion. It was during one of these seasons of withdrawal near the city of Ephraim that the lesson on the reward of service was taught. (Matt. 19:27-30.)

The lesson had its origin in the coming of the young ruler to Jesus to learn the way of eternal life. He had supposed that the way

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to life was through obedience to the law, but Jesus taught that the element of denial or sacrifice was as essential. Jesus impressed that necessity by requiring the young ruler to forsake all and follow Him. Peter was near by and heard the conversation. As he heard Jesus make the demand to forsake all and follow Him, he thought of his own case. He reasoned that he had met that requirement; that he had actually forsaken all in order to follow Jesus. Then a question seemed to present itself to him: "What will I get in return for all this sacrifice? What profit will it bring me?" Peter possessed a commercial mind. It moved in the circle of profit and loss. Often after a night of hard toil on the Sea of Galilee in catching fish, he had wondered what the profit would be. Now, as he had forsaken everything to follow Jesus, he wondered what the reward would be. With his characteristic impulsiveness he determined to find out. So he approached Jesus with the words, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefor?" There are some who are inclined to make light of the sacrifice of Peter as suggested here, and say that all that he

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gave up was a worn-out boat and some old fish-nets. But it should not be forgotten that, however little Peter gave up, it was all he had. He forsook much. Not only had he nets and boats, but he had a home and a wife in Capernaum, and these in a sense were left behind. Peter's home was as dear to him as any man's. His wife was as dear as any. His property was worth as much to him as the wealth of others. Peter had made his sacrifice. And he asked his question in sincerity, and perhaps with the ring of sadness in his voice, as he thought of what had been left behind. The denial was great to him, and having, as he did, the commercial mind, it is not surprising that he should have a question concerning the reward and ask the Master frankly, "What shall we have therefor?"

The question indicates something of the hope yet lingering in the minds of the disciples, and the conception they yet had of the Kingdom Jesus came to establish. It was the old idea of an earthly kingdom, whose provinces should be ruled by the chosen followers of Jesus. Peter probably thought he had given up his boats and nets for a royal robe

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and a scepter. That material gain was to be his compensation; that honor, his reward. Hence his question.

The reply of Jesus reached beyond Peter's expectation. God's rewards are always surprising in their abundance. He gives beyond what we expect. So it was in this case. Jesus in His reply indicated a two-fold reward for service. One was a special reward applying to the chosen apostles only, while the other was a general reward applying to every follower. The language the Lord used was readily understood by the disciples, for He followed the thought they had presented concerning the Kingdom. There *is* to be a Kingdom. There *are* to be thrones. But the Kingdom will not be earthly and the thrones perishing. The Kingdom is the eternal Kingdom, which shall see the spiritual plans of the Lord consummated and the spiritual thrones established. It is to be the Kingdom of the "regeneration," the term having reference to the time of the new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness: the time which Peter in his old age described, and which John saw in his vision.

Jesus implied that His apostles were to



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receive a special reward in the spiritual Kingdom when He said, "Ye shall sit on twelve thrones judging." The Lord meant doubtless that in the new order of things His chosen ones were to occupy important positions and assist in the administration of the spiritual affairs of that Kingdom. The question as to the nature of that work is left in mystery, as is so much of the content of the spiritual Kingdom. But that something of prominence and spiritual authority awaited the apostles as a reward in the consummated Kingdom is indicated in the reply of Jesus to Peter.

But the promise of a general reward followed also. In substance Jesus said (verse 29) that "every one" who had made the sacrifice and followed Him should receive a reward. This reward is one that concerns both the present and the future. In the present it is to be "a hundred-fold" income. This is another way of saying that the one who submits his life fully to God never loses anything by the surrender, even in the material way. He even receives his reward. The reward may come in an increase of the very things he had to sacrifice. But if it does

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not come in that way it will come in another. It may be in part in the sweet peace and bright hope felt in the life that is consciously right with God. This is better than houses and lands, for it brings a happiness and peace they can not bring. Happiness may exist without material wealth. Happiness and virtue are better than riches. Hence we sometimes hear men say they would not part with their religion even if there were no hereafter assured by it. They say it because they are experiencing somewhat of the "hundred-fold" now in the contentment and righteousness which no man taketh from them.

This general reward touches the future, however, as well as the present. According to the reply of Jesus, those who pay the price of denial and follow Him "shall inherit everlasting life." This is the climax of the reward. Ultimately the reward should be an eternal life exempt from the toil, sorrows, and disadvantages of the temporal life, and crowned with unbroken fellowship with the King and with a redeemed citizenship. If Peter comprehended what Jesus meant, he surely thought that he had struck a great bargain. Yet that bargain is the heritage of

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every one who will forsake all and follow the Christ. The reward of that act is a life in the present worth a hundred-fold more than houses and lands, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

### (d) A LESSON ON "THE LAST THINGS."

In this lesson there is a change of time and place. It is Tuesday of Passion Week, and the place is on the side of the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem. Jesus had been in the city all day, but as the evening hour approached He and His disciples left the city and went out to the Mount of Olives for the night. As they passed from the temple, the disciples called the attention of Jesus to the immense stones of which the temple was built. Jesus replied that great as the temple was, there should not be left one stone of it upon another. It was probably this remark which caused the disciples to question Jesus further, after they had come to the Mount. Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to Him privately and asked Him concerning the destruction of the temple and the end of the world. The disciples seemed to connect the destruction of the temple with the end of the

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world. The questions to the Lord were likely put by Peter, who was usually spokesman for the disciples. He was one of the four who came privately to the Lord, and of the four was naturally the leader. The answer of Jesus was a long one, fully recorded in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew. In this answer Jesus touches upon both the destruction of the temple and the end of the world, frequently called "the last things." We will consider here, however, only His teaching concerning the last things which are connected with the second coming of the Lord, or the end of the world. The teachings of Jesus on this subject fall into two divisions, one dealing with the signs preceding the coming, and the other dealing with the characteristics of the coming itself.

Six distinct signs are mentioned as preceding the coming. They may be stated as follows:

1. False Christs shall arise. In almost every age this sign has been fulfilled.

2. Political strife shall be common. There shall be wars and rumors of war. This sign also has had its fulfillment.

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3. Strange physical phenomena shall be witnessed. There shall be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. This sign, too, has been repeatedly fulfilled.

It will be noticed that all three of the foregoing signs were fulfilled in the lifetime of the disciples. The Lord characterized them as the "beginning of sorrows," which indicated that the end was not yet. He then proceeded to the further signs:

4. Persecutions shall arise. The Lord foretold how the disciples would be delivered up to meet affliction and be hated and killed. We have only to recall the final fate of the twelve apostles to realize how well this sign was fulfilled.

5. Apostasies shall occur. False prophets shall arise, many shall be offended, shall betray and hate one another. Because iniquity shall abound, love shall wax cold. In this age this prophecy is being realized. We are in the midst of apostasy variously named. Criticism of everything sacred abounds. The sword-point is turned upon the inspiration of the Word, the genuineness of much of the Scriptures, the divinity of Jesus, the reality of the Holy Spirit, and many other important

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tenets of the Christian faith. Up to this point we may say that the signs named by Jesus have all been fulfilled. But another remains:

6. The world shall be evangelized. The gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world. This is the only sign yet to be fulfilled before the second coming of our Lord, according to His own teaching. Upon it, then, should be placed the Christian's earnest thought and deepest interest. The fulfillment of this sign is committed entirely to the hands of the disciples of Jesus. It is for the sake of its fulfillment that every Christian needs to be interested in the spread of the gospel in foreign lands. How soon it will be fulfilled will depend entirely upon the willingness of Christian people to send the gospel to every creature.

These are the signs preceding the second coming of Christ. Having named them, the Lord proceeded to give some of the characteristics of the coming itself. The twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew is devoted to this purpose. Therein three prominent features are noticed.

1. The time of the coming is uncertain.

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This truth is taught in the parable of the ten virgins. None of the virgins knew the hour of the bridegroom's coming, yet five were prepared and five were unprepared. The fate of the two parties is presented in the joy that awaited the prepared and the sorrow that awaited the unprepared. The teaching of the parable is revealed in the words, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." The thing that concerns the Christian chiefly is not the time or manner of the Lord's coming, but the preparation for that coming. The ideal condition is a state of constant preparedness for that event.

2. During the Lord's absence the chief requirement is faithfulness. This fact is presented under the parable of the talents. (Matt. 25:14-30.) The parable presents forcefully the truth that the measure of the disciple's acceptance is not the number of his talents, but the way he uses them; not his ability so much as his faithfulness. However different their talents may be, God holds in equal favor those who are equally faithful.

3. There is to be a final judgment based on man's conduct. The basis of this judg-

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ment is presented in one of the most graphic pictures ever drawn by Jesus. (Matt. 25: 31-46.) There is to be a general assembly of all the nations of the earth and a passing of judgment upon each individual. Some are to pass into the darkness and sorrow of alienation from God. Others are to pass into the light and joy of the presence of God. The passing of the sentence is not an arbitrary act on the part of the Almighty, but the inevitable consequence of the individual's actions. The basis of the decree is, therefore, not God's decree, but man's conduct. The actions of man toward his fellow-man form a large part of the basis of judgment. A truth emphasized is that God and man are so closely united that the serving or non-serving of man amounts to the serving or non-serving of God. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

It is taught here that our future destiny is dependent, in part at least, upon our present relation to man. We are our brother's keeper. We are to show our love for God by serving the children He has bought with a price. The sincerest gratitude we can render



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God is service rendered His children. The Father is pleased with our prayers of thankfulness, but He is better pleased with our deeds of thankfulness. Dr. W. M. Taylor, in one of his books, relates an incident that is a good illustration of the truth here suggested. More than a hundred years ago, when the custom was to convey wheat to the mill in a sack laid upon the back of a horse, a poor man in Scotland was making a journey to the mill with a heavy sack of grain. The path was rough, and the horse stumbled, throwing the sack of grain to the ground. The poor man was old and weak and was not able, unassisted, to replace the sack on the horse's back. He was perplexed and almost discouraged when, noticing a man approaching on horseback, he determined to ask for help. But when the horseman approached, he proved to be a nobleman who lived in a nearby castle, and the old man's heart sank, for he did not dare to ask a nobleman to assist him with his load. But the nobleman, seeing the situation, rode up, dismounted, and said, "Let me help you, John." Together the men lifted the sack into position, and then the old man, taking off his

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broad Kilmarnock bonnet, said, "Please, your lordship, how shall I ever thank you for your kindness?" "Very easily, John," was the reply. "Whenever you see another man wanting assistance as you were just now, help him, and that will be thanking me."

Well, we were once on the highway struggling with our burden of condemnation and guilt. We tried to lift it. It was heavy. We were discouraged. But we looked and behold, a Nobleman from the skies appeared: God's only Son. He stooped and lifted the load on His own shoulders, and we were free. And if the question should rise to our lips, "Lord, how shall I ever thank Thee?" the answer comes, "When you see another mortal struggling in sin or needing help, give him assistance, and in so doing you will thank Me." This is what the Lord meant when He said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN THE UPPER ROOM.

PASSION WEEK is the most memorable week in human history. Its events deal not only with human life, but with human destiny. It bridges the space between God and man and makes it possible for men to say that they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

The most memorable night of Passion Week was Thursday night, the night of denial. That night is the world's sacred night. We followed Jesus in our thought as He walked the wave with no higher feeling perhaps than that of astonishment at His utter disregard for the laws of nature. We looked upon that quartet on the Mount of Transfiguration, surrounded with divine glory, with feelings of amazement doubtless because of those supernatural manifestations. But we can not enter into a study of the events of that dark, sad Thursday night of

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Passion Week without feelings of holy awe. As we cross the threshold of that night and have its scenes flashed before our minds, a voice seems to whisper to us, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." It is the night in which we see the Lord deliberately planning to pour out His life-blood for men, meanwhile spending His last moments in speaking wise words and doing kind deeds in behalf of those who were soon to repay Him in treachery and desertion. There are several events in that night which provide interesting subjects for study. We are concerned here only with those scenes in which Peter figured prominently. In this chapter and those immediately following, these scenes will be noticed. We turn our attention now to the scene in the "Upper Room."

The lesson on "the last things" had been taught on Tuesday of Passion Week, as Jesus and His disciples were on the side of Mt. Olivet. The following day, Wednesday, is known as the day of quiet or retirement. Jesus is thought to have spent this day in the village of Bethany, where He was surrounded by His friends and where He could

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by prayer and meditation strengthen Himself for the ordeal which He was about to face in Gethsemane and on Calvary. On the following day, Thursday, the day for eating the Passover, He sent two of His disciples into the city to make ready the feast. The two were Peter and John. The prominence in which the Lord yet held Peter should be noticed. He is the first selection from among the disciples to prepare the Passover feast. The preparation consisted of two distinct steps: First, selecting a place for the meal. Second, arranging the necessary provisions for the meal.

The place for holding the Passover was indicated by Jesus. He instructed Peter and John that they would be led to the proper place by a man whom they would find carrying a pitcher of water. When it is remembered that it was the custom for the women and not the men to carry the water, it will be seen that the sign indicated by Jesus was one easily distinguished. A man carrying water was an unusual sight. The two disciples, upon entering the city, found the man indicated and, following him to his home, made request for a room in which to hold

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the feast. It may be of interest here to ask concerning the identity of this man. There is good reason to suppose that he was a disciple of Jesus because of the kindly way in which he granted the request made by the disciples. They asked merely for *a* room, but this man gave them not only *a* room, but the best room in the house. The original Greek word used shows that the disciples asked for a humble place, the word "katalma" being used. The room in which Jesus was born is described as "katalma." It was a humble place. Jesus sought nothing better as a place for eating the feast of the Passover. But this man gave, not a "katalma," but a large upper room, considered the best room in the house. This fact indicates that the man was a friend of Jesus. Tradition says that he was the father of John Mark. If this be true, the Master spent this last night before the crucifixion with friends near. The room granted, known as the Upper Room, occupied the uppermost part of the house and was usually reached by an outside stairway. This fact would make it possible for the Lord and His disciples to enter and possess the room with-

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out disturbing any one or being disturbed. The room was "furnished," as the account says, which means that it contained a table for the supper and the couches to be arranged around it in Oriental style.

Here the disciples prepared the Passover. The lamb necessary for the feast was prepared with the usual ceremonies, doubtless being slain at the temple between the hours of three and six in the afternoon, as was the Jewish custom. In the preparation it was necessary that the lamb be roasted on a pomegranate spit in such a way that its flesh at no time came in contact with the oven. In addition to the lamb, it was necessary to prepare the wine, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the festive lamps.

Before the evening hour had arrived the preparations were completed, and Peter and John went forth to meet Jesus and the other disciples as they came from Olive's slope to eat the Passover. Doubtless all the little company cleansed themselves at the public bath, as was the custom, and then at the appointed hour proceeded to the Upper Room. The company may be looked upon as a family of which Jesus is the Head. According to

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custom, at least ten persons are necessary to constitute a family for eating the Pass-over. The family of Jesus was, therefore, full size. Soon after entering the room the threefold blast of the silver trumpet at the temple rang out, announcing that the feast was on. Jesus and The Twelve reclined at the table, and the feast began.

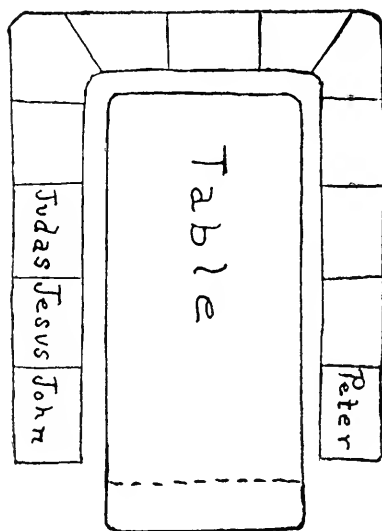
The positions which the disciples occupied at the table furnish a subject of interest, and help in remembering the scene. An order of arrangement that meets all the details of the gospel accounts is suggested by Eder-sheim, who, being a Jewish convert to Christianity, was thoroughly familiar with the customs of the Jews, both modern and ancient. He assumes that Jesus and His disciples were around three sides of a long table, forming thus a figure somewhat in the shape of a horseshoe. The arrangement may be seen by studying the design taken from Edersheim.

At one end of the table was John, while just across from him on the opposite side was Peter. Next to John and on the same side of the table was Jesus, while next to Him came Judas, the traitor. This order is sug-



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gested by certain references made in the Gospels to the acts and conversations occurring at the table. It explains how it would be possible for Jesus to whisper to John, telling



him the sign by which to detect the traitor. It shows how it was possible for Jesus to inform Judas that he was the traitor without others hearing His remark. It shows, too, how it was possible for Peter to speak to John across the table and ask who the traitor

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was. Thus placed at the table, the feast began.

It seems that at the very beginning of the feast a contention arose as to the privilege of occupying the seat of highest honor next to Jesus. It seems sad that the Last Supper should be marred by the presence of strife, yet such was the case. We may imagine from past actions that Peter would be prominent in this contention, and it is likely that he secured a position next to the Lord. Then came the rebuke from Jesus, in which He taught that humility was more beautiful than strife, and that he who would be the greatest must be the humblest. It would be like Peter, too, as he realized the force of this lesson, to rush from the head of the table down to the foot in evidence of his humility. At any rate, it seems evident that he occupied a position at the foot of the table opposite John, as suggested above.

It was because of this strife that Jesus warned and tested Peter, telling him that on that night Satan would sift him as wheat. Peter, with his usual self-confidence, informed the Lord that he was ready to go with Him to prison or even unto death. It

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was in answer to this assumption on the part of Peter that Jesus foretold to him that on that very night he was to deny Him thrice.

The supper proceeded. There are a few features connected with it which should be noticed. The disciples doubtless reclined at the table, instead of being seated as is the custom to-day. The Jewish law directed that persons in eating the Passover recline on pillows laid around a low table, the head resting on the left hand so that the right might be free. Imagine the disciples thus located. The first act in the Pascal Supper was the blessing of the *first* cup by the head of the table. This Jesus did, and afterward took bread and passed it to the disciples. This part of the ceremony was usually followed by the head of the table rising and washing his hands. Jesus rose to this office, but instead of following the usual custom, brought in a new ceremony. It was the washing of the feet of the disciples—an object lesson in humility, made the more needful by the dispute which had just arisen. Jesus rose from the table, laid aside His upper garment, girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and prepared to do the

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work of the meanest slave, namely, washing the feet of those at the table. Thus girded, He came to Simon Peter and began the menial work. Since Peter occupied the end of the table, it was natural for Jesus to come to him first. The part of the table projecting beyond the couches, as shown in the diagram, would be used for the basins, water and extra vessels. To this point Jesus would have to proceed in preparing Himself for the service contemplated. From this point it was natural that He should turn to the place occupied by Peter, it being immediately at hand. As Jesus approached Peter, the latter was amazed at the act and surprise leaped from his lips in the words, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" The arrangement of the words in the original reveals more clearly the surprise and embarrassment of Peter. The original has it, "Lord—Thou—of me—wastest the feet!" It is an exclamation of surprise with the emphasis thrown on the contrast between the One to do the washing and the one to be washed; between Jesus the Master and Peter the servant. There was something so grotesque in the thought of the Master becoming servant to the servant that Peter's impulsive

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nature rose in protest, and he declared, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Peter evidently thought it would be more appropriate for him to wash the feet of Jesus than for the reverse to be permitted. The spirit of Peter's protest must, therefore, be admired, while his utter inability to comprehend the meaning of the Lord's act must be regretted.

But Jesus brought Peter to his senses by saying, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Peter immediately reversed his attitude, as his wont was. He saw that refusal would mean separation from the Master, while submission meant continued fellowship. He therefore swung from one extreme to the other. If washing meant to have a part with Jesus, he would have not only his feet washed, but his hands and his head. Hence he replied to Jesus, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But Jesus informed him that such an extreme act was unnecessary, and proceeded with the solemn and sacred task of washing the disciples' feet, and wiping them with the towel. This was an act indicative of humility and service on the part of Jesus, and it has its lessons of importance.

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The meaning of the act is twofold. In the first place, the washing was typical of cleansing from sin through the work of Jesus. This thought was expressed in the words of Jesus to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." No one can be a partaker of the Kingdom save by the washing of Jesus. He was going from that Upper Room to shed His blood that by it men might be washed from sin. Unless He shed that blood there could be no remission of sin. Except a man be purged through the shed blood he has no part with Christ.

In the second place, the act was typical of Christian service in its essential spirit. Jesus said, "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you." The meaning is not that men should literally wash the feet of one another, but that they should have the spirit of humility and service which was exhibited by Jesus when He washed the disciples' feet. The example was in the spirit, not in the act. As Jesus humbly served, so men should do, for the servant is not greater than the Lord. The spirit of humble service is the essential thing. What a benediction to the Church it would be if we

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really possessed that spirit! Did we have it there would be no strife or contention. These arise from our desires to be masters rather than servants. Did we have it there would be less distress outside the Church. Society is not founded on the principle of service to others. It is, rather, the principle of others serving us. Men are inclined to make servants of others, rather than become servants to others. Men are willing to make footbridges of others over which they may walk to some coveted goal. When society reverses the present order and begins to act on the principle of service to others, there will be less of inequality, injustice, oppression, and distress.

This act of service in the Upper Room being completed, the supper was soon ended. Before the little company left that room at about the midnight hour, other lessons had been taught and words spoken which have been a benediction to every age. Among these may be mentioned the following:

1. The comforting deliverance of Jesus recorded in the fourteenth chapter of St. John. It may be called Christ's dying message to the world, and has brought unmeas-

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ured comfort to troubled hearts in all conditions of need.

2. The lesson on the necessity of abiding in Christ, taught in the fifteenth chapter of St. John.

3. The memorable prayer of Jesus for His disciples, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John. This prayer is *supposed* to have been uttered in the Upper Room.

4. These lessons, with all the comfort and instruction they contain, come to us as our heritage from that sad night of long ago. No time was lost that night. Every moment was well improved. If there can be found anywhere an illustration of the truth that out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh, it was here. The heart of Jesus was full. He was facing death. Like a dying father who calls his sons around his bed to give them farewell instructions, Jesus called His disciples into that room and talked with and prayed with them. Every passing moment was filled with some word or act. But at last the end came. The moment for departure arrived. Mark tells us that "when they had sung an hymn, they went out into



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the Mount of Olives." It was a going out into darkness, into betrayal, denial, agony, and death. One of England's greatest preachers, commenting on this scene, says: "There never was such a going out before; there never will be such a going out again. Let us be very quiet just now: the Master has gone out—He is on His way to Gethsemane!

*"To Gethsemane!"*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### IN GETHSEMANE.

IN describing the scene in that Upper Room in Jerusalem, both Matthew and Mark conclude by saying, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." Imagine the little company leaving the room and passing out into the streets of Jerusalem. If we ask the position occupied by Peter as the company walked through the streets, a satisfactory answer will be found in assuming that he walked either at the Master's side, or followed close behind Him like a child. In fact, the conversation indulged in on the way to Gethsemane would seem to indicate that Peter and Jesus walked side by side. Peter was clearly close to Jesus, for when the latter talked, Peter heard and was the first to answer. It would be in keeping with suggestions elsewhere made to imagine that Peter walked on one side of Jesus and John on the other. The two who

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had prepared the feast for the Lord in the Upper Room would have a right to lead the way with Him to Gethsemane.

It must have been near midnight when Jesus and His disciples walked through the streets of the city, yet those streets were doubtless filled with people who were preparing to go up to the temple, whose gates were opened at midnight. Passing through the city, Jesus and His little company left the city by the eastern gate, north of the temple, and crossed the brook called Kidron. It was perhaps close to the brook that the conversation occurred to which reference has already been made. The conversation is so important that it should be noticed in passing. Jesus said to the disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night." There was a sweeping accusation in that statement. Not only were Judas and Peter to prove unfaithful, but all the disciples were to become offended. How well this prophecy was carried out may be seen in the fact that before that night passed "they all forsook Him and fled." The word "offended" as used here by Jesus means literally to stumble. All were to stumble or fall in their faith

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and devotion to Jesus that night, because of what should befall Him.

Peter heard the statement of Jesus and, as usual, took exception to it. He did not know that Jesus knew him better than he knew himself. The statement of the Lord was sweeping, but Peter did not propose to be encompassed by it. Hence he impulsively declared, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Then came from Jesus the still more startling declaration, "In this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." Calmly it was said, as though spoken by One to whom the future was as well known as the present. But Peter still had a contempt for the suggestion, and replied, "If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise." This was not the proud assertion of a boastful man. Peter said it in sincerity. He meant it. He was yet all aglow with the lessons he had learned and the gentle words he had heard in the Upper Room, and he really felt so attracted to the Lord that he thought he was willing to make great sacrifices for Him. Peter little knew his own weakness and did not know how he would

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tremble when the time of crisis came. Like the drunkard who swears honestly that the last drop of liquor has been tasted, and yet falls when the temptation sways him, Peter thought he was strong enough to stand, but was mistaken. How little we know of our own weakness! When we think we are strong we are often weak. Our weakness, however, like that of Peter, is often in the fact that we are self-centered instead of God-centered. The old lesson needs to be ever newly learned that if one would be strong, it must be in the Lord and in the power of His might, and not in the power of self.

After this conversation the little company proceeded to Gethsemane. This was a quiet garden spot on the slope of Mt. Olivet, and a place where Jesus had often retired before. It was to be the scene that night of the agony of the Master.

There were two scenes in the garden in which Peter figured prominently. In the first, Peter appears as a sleeping sentinel. After entering the garden, Jesus left eight of the disciples behind Him, going forward a short distance with Peter, James, and John to pray. These three men were

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taken by Jesus several times on special missions. They were with Him when He raised the daughter of Jairus, and again were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. The quartet in the garden are, therefore, familiar figures. Jesus doubtless took these three with Him on this occasion because He wanted the consoling presence of His nearest friends in His last hours before death. One approaching rapidly the end of life will naturally cling closely to his nearest friends. So Jesus, facing this dread hour and His hastening death, would have His bosom friends near Him. Proceeding with these three friends into the garden, Jesus opened His heart to them, saying, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." This statement is at once a measure of His grief and a prophecy of its outcome. The Lord was exceedingly sorrowful; that is, weighted down with a crushing burden of grief. And had He not great cause for grief? Judas was soon to betray Him with a kiss. Peter was soon to deny Him with an oath. The disciples were soon to forsake Him and flee. He was soon to experience the loneliness of the withdrawal of the Father's

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presence while He would be left standing alone with the billows of death and hell rolling over Him. He was soon to suffer the agony and shame of a death by crucifixion. Little wonder He was exceedingly sorrowful!

But He implied in that statement that the outcome of His sorrow would be death. The last hour was at hand. The sorrow was to be augmented until it culminated in death. This fact Jesus would have the three friends understand. Understanding it, one would naturally expect them to be sympathetic and alert. But not so. Soon a startling indifference was evidenced. Jesus, leaving the three together, went forward a short distance to pray alone. His prayer was suggestive: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." In praying that the cup might pass from Him, Jesus was not necessarily asking that He might escape death. He was expecting that fate, and was ready for it. But there were other elements of bitterness in His cup more dreaded than death itself. The treachery of Judas; the falling away of Peter; the scattering of His sheep; the temporary triumph of His ene-

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mies over His cause; these to a nature as sensitive as Christ's would be painful in the extreme. Might not this cup of bitterness pass away? Jesus might naturally hope that there would be a way for accomplishing the desired end without the attendant apostasies and humiliations. Yet He was willing to suffer even this if need be, hence the prayer, "Thy will be done."

Coming from His season of prayer and hungering for sympathy, Jesus approached Peter, James, and John and found them asleep. His disappointment was revealed in the words which He spake to Peter, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" Why He addressed the words to Peter may be seen when we remember that it was he who had said, only a little while before this, that he was ready to go with the Master even to death. After that boast, he of all the disciples should have been watchful. But even Peter sleeps! A sleeping sentinel! There is something not only sad, but very suggestive in the situation. Here is a soldier in God's garden at a post of duty, yet he is asleep. How oft the scene is repeated in the present day! When Jesus stands be-



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fore His modern followers and points to the fields white and ready for the harvest, and asks that the sheaves be gathered in, and we fail to heed, are we not as really asleep as was Peter in the garden? If we go on our own way, seeking our own selfish pleasures while God's children are hungering and His cause suffering, and the Lord is saying, "Feed My sheep," are we not asleep? When in this land of ours the bloody assassin Intemperance stands with drawn sword, letting that sword fall something like twelve times every hour, and each time slaying somebody's father, husband, brother, or son, and we stir not to stop the bloodshed, are we not asleep? Christian people are too often asleep to some of these needs, and ought to be aroused.

Three times Jesus came from His praying and found Peter and the others asleep. At the third time the crisis had passed and Jesus said to the sleepers, "Sleep on now and take your rest." It was only another way of saying: "I do not need your watchfulness now. I have endured the agony alone. The hour is come in which the Son of man is to be betrayed into the hands of

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sinner.” Perhaps at that very moment the light from the torches in the hands of the approaching mob could be seen flashing through the darkness. The mob entered Gethsemane led by the traitor Judas. Jesus knew that His hour had come. So He changed His injunction to the sleepers and said, “Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me.” These words of Jesus, together with the light and sounds from the advancing crowd, aroused the sleeping sentinels, and they became alert. Jesus advanced to meet the mob, and as He did so, Judas greeted Him, throwing his arms around the Master’s neck and kissing Him. That token of affection became the sign of treachery, for by it the mob recognized Jesus, and advanced with staves and swords to lay hands upon Him. It was just here that Peter figured in the second scene of that sad night in the garden.

In this second scene Peter appeared as the fighting disciple. The sleeping sentinel was suddenly transformed and assumed a new part. From the one extreme of lethargy he passed to the opposite extreme of violence. He had carried with him from

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the Upper Room a short sword. This sword Peter hastily drew and struck a blow in defense of the Master. The blow fell on the head of the servant of the high priest and the ear was severed from the head. Peter was now fully aroused. He remembered how he had said he would die for the Master if necessary. He remembered, too, with shame how he had slept when the Master wanted him to watch. He now proposed, therefore, to atone for his neglect and make good his word. We must admire the motive of Peter here, and give him credit for possessing something of the courage of the soldier. He was ready for a fight. He was keyed up now to face any danger. But as usual, his impulsiveness proceeded on mistaken grounds and brought him to embarrassment. Before Peter had an opportunity to strike a second blow, he heard the gentle yet firm voice of the Master saying, "Put up again the sword into his place." Peter with the meekness of a child obeyed instantly. While we must deplore his inability to understand Jesus, we must yet admire Peter's willingness to obey Him. Peter meant well, but he frequently did poorly.

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Had he reversed his actions that night, it would have been better. He should have been awake when he slept, and peaceable when he fought. His defense of Jesus availed nothing. The quiet submission of Jesus gave the mob its opportunity, and Jesus was seized and dragged away like a felon, while the disciples, according to the sad record, all forsook Him and fled. The crowd led the Lord out from the garden—out to the mock trial, to the crown of thorns, to the cruel cross.

The scenes in which Peter figured that night have some valuable lessons for the Christian student. We will notice three of them briefly.

*not*  
1. Peter's self-confidence suggests the danger of trusting self. In the conversation on the way to the garden, Peter evidenced confidence in his own loyalty. He felt that he was strong within himself and that there was no danger. Results showed, however, that when he thought himself the safest he was in the greatest danger. His danger was in trusting his own strength. Had he relied on the power of the Master instead of the power of self, his record that night would

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have been different. Pride goeth before a fall in religious matters as well as elsewhere. The one who boasts of what he will do, meanwhile leaving God out of the count, is likely preparing for a fall. The Christian should always add as a qualification to his proud assertions, "If God wills." History tells us that William II of England once stood on some high rocks in North Wales and caught a glimpse of the coast of Ireland. He immediately exclaimed, "I will summon here all the ships of my realm and with them make a bridge to attack that country." When this threat was reported to the Prince of Leinster, he inquired, "Did the king add to his mighty threat, 'If God please?'" Being told that the king made no reference to God, the prince replied, "That man puts his trust in human, not in divine power; I fear not his coming." King William was shot dead with an arrow while hunting in a forest some time later and never made his boasted conquest. It is always best to form a partnership with God in life's endeavors. The Christian should avoid the mistake of the king and of Peter, and trust always in divine power rather than human.

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2. Peter's sleepiness in an hour of need is a warning against allowing ourselves to be overcome with worldly cares and selfish desires while the cause of Christ is left to suffer. Each Christian is placed by divine appointment at some post of duty. That fact is certain. God expects watchfulness and faithfulness. It is easy to fall into a spiritual slumber even when watchfulness is badly needed. Some time ago, at a railway crossing where he had served for years with marked faithfulness, a watchman in Indiana was found asleep in his chair. His friends approached him in surprise, for never in twenty years had he slept at his post of duty. But a closer investigation showed that his sleep was a sleep of death. He was dead in his chair. His was a splendid record. Faithful unto death! To no sleep was the watchman willing to succumb save the sleep of death. A faithfulness like that should be the aim of every Christian. The Master's injunction is to watch—even unto death.

3. Peter's attempt to fight suggests that wisdom should be used in our methods of serving Jesus. His purpose to serve Jesus was right, but his method was wrong. The

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method would have resulted in more harm than good. The method of Jesus was always love. Force and violence were aside from His spirit. It is possible to have the sincere purpose of doing the Master a service and yet employ a method which would be displeasing to Him. Methods of force, of hate or revenge, of selfish parade, of insincerity or worldliness, are all foreign to the wish and plan of Jesus. We hear frequently of a public dance being given under the name of a charity ball, the proceeds to go for so-called Christian charity. When the fact is recalled that the public dance is responsible for the downfall of eighty per cent of the fallen women of this country, it can be seen that such a function given in the name of Christian charity would be about as pleasing to Jesus Christ as would be the stealing of somebody's pocketbook for the purpose of getting some missionary money. The fact is that the Church to-day needs sadly a revival on the point of proper methods of serving Jesus, lest the service be offered in a way which is a positive offense.

In the experience of every one there comes the dark, solemn walk to some Geth-

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semane, where the test of our worth and loyalty is made. There is but one qualification that can support us in the walk and cause us to stand in the test, and that is the presence of the Lord Jesus. Would we sing a song as we go; would we stand aright, watch aright, serve aright, we must have that one essential qualification,—Christ within.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE THREE DENIALS.

MATTHEW closes his description of the scene in the garden with the words, "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." It almost makes us indignant to think that in the hour of His sorest need all of the trusted friends of Jesus should thus deny Him and leave Him friendless, helpless, and exposed to the insults of the heartless mob. It is comforting, however, to know that the desertion was of short duration, at least as far as two of the disciples were concerned. Peter and John speedily rallied and determined to watch the outcome of the Master's arrest. Whether these two disciples were together when they determined to follow Jesus, we do not know. We know more of the actions of Peter at this particular time than of John. As the mob led Jesus back to the city, Peter followed, we are told, afar off. The actions of Peter are so closely interwoven with the fate of Jesus that in following the career of

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the latter we best get an understanding of the actions of Peter in that fatal night. Jesus was led by His captors back to the city, traversing perhaps the same pathway He had trodden with His disciples only a short time before as they went to Gethsemane. He probably entered the city by the same gate through which He went as He walked to His agony.

Entering the city, Jesus was led first to the home of Annas, who but recently had occupied the office of high priest, and who because of that fact was a man of great influence. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, was the acting high priest. It may have been largely a matter of compliment to Annas that Jesus was taken to him first instead of to Caiaphas. Or, it may have been that the accusers of Jesus preferred to have Annas try and condemn Him, inasmuch as he was a man of much influence with the Roman authorities because of his great wealth and liberal views. A condemnation from him would be speedily sanctioned by the Roman governor. At any rate, Jesus was led first to Annas. We know nothing of what happened there—whether Jesus was questioned much or not at all. We

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only know that Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, the high priest, for trial. The trial was held in the house or palace of Caiaphas. It was there, too, that the three denials of Peter occurred. The scene here is so important that it should be fixed in our minds. The palace of Caiaphas was likely built in the usual Oriental style. There would be an outer court or yard next to the street, from which a wicket gate would admit a person through a wall into an inner court. Around three sides of this inner court there would be open porches, through which one could pass to the rooms of the palace.

It seems evident that Peter and John had come together at some place before they reached the palace of Caiaphas, and likely in company came to the palace. John was known to the high priest and the attendants at the gate, and had no difficulty in being admitted through the wicket gate into the inner court. Peter, however, was not so fortunate and was stopped at the gate that his case might be investigated. Hence the statement is made that he stood without at the gate. John had hurried in without noticing the difficulty of Peter, but when he observed

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that Peter had failed to enter, he went back and, speaking to the maid who kept the gate, secured permission for Peter to be brought into the inner court. The maid scanned him closely as he passed, and doubtless remembered that she had seen him at the temple in company with Jesus. Some interpreters place the first denial of that night here at the gate as Peter entered. They do so because the account by John seems at first glance to imply that the denial occurred here. But by noticing more closely, it will be seen that John does not really say that it was at the gate that the maid spoke to Peter, but that it was the maid who kept the gate who spoke to Peter. John does not indicate the place. But the other three Gospels imply that Peter was within the court by the fire when the maid approached him. Mark and Luke both clearly state this fact. So it is safe to place the first denial at the fire in the center of the inner court. It must be remembered that the time of year was early spring and the nights were cool, hence those servants and attendants who did not go into the palace built them a fire in the court and sat around it warming themselves.

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When Peter entered he was probably chilled in soul as well as body, and almost trembling with fear at the consequences should it be discovered that he was a friend of Jesus and the one who had wounded the servant of the high priest in the garden. He approached the fire to warm, and was evidently followed there by the maid who kept the gate. John meanwhile had gone into the palace to witness the trial of Jesus. As Peter sat at the fire surrounded by the enemies of Jesus, the maid spoke to him and said, "Art thou not also one of this Man's disciples?" Peter was alarmed. In that company a confession of discipleship would be dangerous. If it did not mean violence and bodily hurt to Peter, it might mean banishment from the palace. Hence, quickly and with a boldness born of desperation, Peter replied, "I am not." Luke tells us that the maid said to the other men at the fire, "This man was also with Him." Considerable suspicion was thus attached to Peter. Matthew and Mark tell us that following this denial Peter walked out into the porch. He was nervous and while in the light of the fire was too closely watched for

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comfort. Hence he withdrew for a walk through the porches surrounding the palace. But his absence from the company at the fire might excite more suspicion than his presence, so he soon strolled back to the fire and took his place among the servants and officers. But hardly had he returned when another maid, or possibly the same maid, approached him and said, "Thou art also one of His disciples." But Peter denied again, this time with an oath, and said, "I am not." This second denial was probably only a few moments after the first. Luke tells us that something like an hour elapsed between the second denial and the third. It was an hour filled with events so interesting that we must pause and notice it.

During the hour the attention of those at the fire was turned from Peter to other objects. Those other objects were the members of the Sanhedrin, who during the hour began to come into the court and to pass through it to the room in the palace of the high priest, where the trial was to be held. These members had held themselves in readiness for a night call in order that they might try Jesus, and now they were hastily assembling. It

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should be noted that this court which assembled to try Jesus was not an entirely legal court, and hence the trial was in some respects an irregular proceeding. The court was self-constituted, and had for its purpose the finding of a charge against Jesus on the strength of which they might pass the death sentence and present Him to Pilate for the purpose of having the sentence executed.

The members of the court sat on cushions arranged in the form of a horseshoe, with Caiaphas at the central point. At his side, according to custom, sat the oldest members of the court, at their sides the next oldest, and so on down to the youngest. At each end of the horseshoe sat a scribe writing down the proceedings. Before Caiaphas stood Jesus, and back of Him the bailiffs with thongs in their hands. So far the assembly had the appearance of lawfulness. Nevertheless the proceedings were irregular and in some respects unlawful. According to Jewish law the accused was to be held innocent until proven guilty. This court assumed the guilt of Jesus. Again, it was unlawful to conduct a criminal trial in the night time, and also unlawful to pronounce a sentence

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of guilt until the day after the trial had occurred. These points were all violated in the case of Jesus. The violation shows the desperate purpose of His enemies to convict Him at all hazards.

The trial proceeded, and while it was in progress those around the fire were so interested in speculating on its outcome that Peter was forgotten for the time being. But about the time the trial closed and the members of the Sanhedrin were passing out, Peter came again into the light of the fire, and those who sat about it turned to him for the third time. One of the servants of the high priest who was related to the man whom Peter had struck in the garden said, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" If Peter had been alarmed before, he was more so now, as he stood before one who had seen him in the garden and had witnessed his act of violence. It would require a big lie now, thought Peter, to save him. As men usually do when they have a weak cause to defend, Peter grew boisterous. The account says that he began to curse and to swear, declaring between his awful oaths that he knew nothing of Jesus of Nazareth.



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What a scene that! As we look at that swearing, lying, disloyal man, we wonder if this can be the same man who, up yonder in the quiet shades of Mount Hermon, so enjoyed the companionship of the heavenly visitors that he longed to remain in their presence, and proposed to build three dwelling-places in order that the divine companionship might be continuously enjoyed. Can this be the same man who in the Upper Room had prayed that the Lord might wash not his feet only, but also his hands and head? Can it be the same man who, only a few brief hours ago, swore that he would die before he would betray his Master? Yes, it is the same man. And yet how changed he is! How fallen! This fall of Peter shows us how possible it is for a nature which is capable of great good to be also capable of great evil. Those intense, energetic natures which are able to accomplish the most good when rightly guided are often capable of accomplishing the greatest evil when misguided. The pendulum that swings the farthest in one direction also swings the farthest in the opposite direction. Human life is much the same. This experience of Peter is at any

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rate a warning to us. The standing we have to-day is no guarantee of the standing we have to-morrow. We need to be on our guard lest we fall.

In the history of these three denials of Peter there are several features which are worthy of special attention because of their practical suggestiveness. We will notice three of them.

1. The causes which led to Peter's fall. If we study that night of denial closely we will find that there were several steps which led to the final fall. First of all, there was that proud, self-confident spirit of Peter. He was so confident of his own ability to stand that he could chide the Master for suggesting the possibility of a fall. This self-confidence blinded Peter to his own weakness. Such a spirit is always attended with danger. The life that is the most proud and self-confident religiously is most ready for a fall. Its strength is in self instead of in God. On the other hand, the life that hesitates to trust self, but in the spirit of humility exercises mighty faith in God, is always the safest in the presence of temptation and sin.

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Peter's neglect of duty was another step in his downfall. He slept in the garden when he should have been watching. Many a backslidden disciple, recalling the beginning of his decline, can see that the downward start was in some neglect of duty. It was when he absented himself from the house of God, or omitted the reading of the Word, or neglected the duty of daily private prayer, or neglected some other means of grace. It is safe to say that a life that never neglects any known Christian duties will never have the sad experience of apostasy that Peter had.

Again, another step in Peter's fall was the act of sin in smiting the servant in the garden. It was an act contrary to the will and spirit of Jesus. It placed Peter under the oppressive consciousness of guilt. Weakened by self-confidence, and adding the evil of neglect, Peter was ready to become an easy victim of sin. Sin helped to unnerve him until he was ready for a fall into almost any abyss.

2. The immediate cause of each denial. The first denial was caused by a desire for an advantage involving wrong conduct.

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Peter wanted the advantage of holding a place in the court along with those who were not the friends of Jesus. It was an advantage that involved the telling of a lie. Yet Peter was willing to pay the price. He desired to hold his position in the court though he had to assume to be the enemy of Jesus to do it. The desire for any position that involves sin is a dangerous possession for a Christian. Paul understood that when he exhorted the followers of Christ to covet only the best things.

The second denial was the result largely of sinful association. Peter placed himself in association with the enemies of Jesus, and that companionship had its effect upon him. It caused him to take upon himself for the time being the nature of those with whom he associated and to pose as an enemy of Jesus. This was not a desirable position for Peter to occupy. Association always has its effect. Sinful association is never safe. It is often the forerunner of actual sin. For this reason one needs to be exceedingly careful of the company he seeks or tolerates. It is difficult to remain clean in a coal mine.

The third denial was prompted by the

## THE THREE DENIALS.

consciousness of sin and guilt. Peter was guilty of the wrong of striking off the ear of the servant of the high priest. The consciousness of the sin was vivid. When mention of the sin was made, Peter trembled. Sin doth make cowards of us all. And more, unrighted sin leads to worse ruin. As the disease hidden within the body will ruin the body, so sin hidden in the life will ruin the life if not itself removed.

3. The rapid progress of sin. The first sin of Peter was merely a falsehood. When asked by the maid if he was one of the disciples, he said merely, "I am not." But the second sin was more than a falsehood. It amounted to perjury. Peter not only denied that he was a disciple, but took oath to that effect. The third denial was still worse. In addition to the former offenses, Matthew tells us that Peter began to curse and to swear. This denial was the combining of a lie, perjury, and blasphemy. In these facts may be seen the rapid and awful growth of sin. It asks only for a foothold in the life. That once granted, it makes a steady advance that can be checked only by the power of God.

Poor Peter! How sadly fallen and hu-

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miliated! It seemed as if he had now gone to the last extreme.

Who falls from all he knows of earthly bliss,  
Cares little into what abyss.

But Peter did care, as we shall see later. But at present we must leave him standing in the night, his curses yet falling from his lips, the flickering light of the fire causing the shadows to come and go across his face, symbolic of the tides of darkness at that moment rolling over his soul.

## CHAPTER X.

### REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION.

IN the last chapter we left Peter standing in the sin of his third denial, the curses yet falling from his lips. That position was a rather undesirable one for a disciple of Jesus, but we have the satisfaction of knowing that Peter did not long remain in that position. Peter had too good a heart and too much love for the Master to remain long in the state of sin. We soon find him coming back to his better self. From the condition of sin he speedily passed to that of repentance, and finally to restoration. There were two events following the third denial almost immediately which contributed to Peter's speedy recovery. The events were seemingly very insignificant, and yet were of the highest importance.

The first event was the crowing of the cock. To the others in the court the crowing of the cock meant nothing more than the heralding of an approaching day. But to

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Peter that sound was a night alarm arousing him as from a slumber to the consciousness of impending danger. Jesus had told him that before the crowing of the cock he should deny Him. As Peter, therefore, heard the shrill notes of the fowl sounding out on the night air he was startled. Like a man who is suddenly awakened from his dreams to face an unexpected danger, Peter was now thoroughly aroused. He remembered the words of Jesus, and how he had laughed at them and thought a denial impossible. He now saw, however, that Jesus was right. He saw, too, how weak and how mean he had been. He saw the need of his own nature as he had never seen it before. He saw the awful danger into which he was sinking. Peter saw, and was now thoroughly awake.

The second event to which reference has been made followed immediately after the first. While the echoes of the cock's warning were yet ringing in his ears, Peter turned from the fire in the court, before which the denials were made. The men who had been attending the trial of Jesus were at that moment filing down from the court room and were passing through the open porch toward



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the wicket gate. They were leading with them the Divine Prisoner. Submissively the Captive was walking, not a murmur escaping His lips. He was being led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. As Peter turned from the fire, Jesus was passing by. He turned His eyes toward Peter. Luke says, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Just one glance it was, but a glance that had a world of meaning hidden in it. It was a piercing glance. It was a searching glance. Had Jesus flung a dart into the heart of Peter it could not have hurt him more. Peter felt that darts were more deserved than the kind of a glance he received. The glance reached his heart. It recalled again the prophecies Jesus had made concerning him. It seemed to flash upon him the awfulness of the denial and fall. It told Peter that the Lord knew all of his weakness and sin. It showed him, as by a searchlight, the greatness of his transgression. There was something of a rebuke in the glance, yet there was so much of tenderness and of forgiveness that the heart of Peter was melted. That look from the Lord plowed the nature

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of Peter to its depth. It stirred remorse and shame within him until he could endure it no longer and, as the account says, he went out into the darkness and wept bitterly. He probably followed Jesus and His captors out through the wicket gate, and while the Lord was led on to the judgment hall of Pilate, Peter stood alone in the night and wept.

Bitter tears! Yet we must welcome them and rejoice, for in them we find the first indication of the fallen man's return to grace. Those tears were the redeeming feature of Peter's actions on that sad, dark night. They were the foretokens of his salvation from the sin of the fall. If he had hardened his heart and persevered in his sin, there would have been no salvation for him. But when we see him in tears because of his sin we know he is on the way to recovery. Happy the man who can weep because of his transgression! The man who is heartless and unmoved in the midst of his sin has little hope of redemption. But the man who is so smitten by his sin that he can go out and weep bitterly is one who by his very condition has opened heaven's gate for his return. There is an old story

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of a candidate for the Eternal City who approached the gates bearing in his hands gold and silver and precious gems. By these he hoped to gain admission to the city. He presented his treasures in turn, but each was rejected as being insufficient. Other treasures of earthly value were presented, but with like results. At last the candidate presented a tear-drop from the eye of a penitent sinner. The angels of heaven looked upon it with admiration. To them it seemed as a diamond of rarest value and greatest beauty. Upon its presentation the gates of heaven were thrown back and the candidate given a glad welcome. The tear of penitence is the key to heaven. We should rejoice as we see these tears of penitence in the eyes of Peter, for they were the agency for opening the gates of pardon to the sinning man. Wherever there is a sinner to-day weeping because of his transgressions, there is a candidate for pardon and for the Kingdom of God. Tears of penitence are the pledge of pardon and restitution.

An unwritten chapter in the life of St. Peter might be inserted just here. Those bitter tears were shed early on Friday morn-

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ing. From that time until an early hour on Sunday morning we have no account whatever of Peter's actions. Two days of silence! Perhaps his sorrow was so deep and his shame so great that the sacred writers have preferred not to make a show of it. Perhaps Peter retired from public gaze and kept the bitter experiences of those intervening hours hidden from every one but himself. At any rate, we are left with nothing more satisfactory than speculation concerning those days. We are justified in supposing, however, that there were prayers for forgiveness mingled with those tears. During the two days of silence Peter was probably suffering in heart-broken penitence. The records are strangely silent concerning him. On the day following the denial, when the Lord was being crucified, we have no account of Peter being near the cross. John and the women were there, but Peter is not mentioned. Probably he was suffering somewhere alone, feeling too guilty to look upon the Lord in His agony. When the Lord was being lowered from the cross, and during those long hours He was lying in the tomb, Peter was, so far as we know, a silent and almost for-

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gotten member of the apostolic band. But on Sunday morning, the morning of the resurrection, the restitution of this fallen man began.

In the process of that restitution there are several steps which should be noticed. The first step was, of course, the repentance, to which reference has already been made. No backslider from the grace of God can find his way back to the Father without first repenting of his sin as did Peter. But Peter took another and more advanced step, which was wise. He sought association with Christ's people. On that Sunday morning we find him with the disciples. When he sought their company he took a step toward restitution. Peter was associated with John, at least, on the resurrection morning. When Mary Magdalene came early in the morning to the tomb she found it empty and ran, as the account says, and told Peter and John what she had found. Hence the two friends were together once more on that resurrection morn. Together they ran to the tomb. It was an interesting race. John was flying on the wings of love, and Peter on the wings of sorrow. Love won, as it ever wins. The men

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entered the tomb, Peter after John, found evidences of the resurrection, and returned to the city to tell the news. Here Peter's restitution was completed by another step which awaited him. That step was the receiving of evidences of divine forgiveness and acceptance.

There were two events which evidenced that forgiveness and acceptance. The first was the message which Jesus sent to Peter through the angel at the tomb. The angel said to the women, "Go your way, tell the disciples *and Peter* that He goeth before you into Galilee." The angel was the Lord's messenger speaking from the tomb where He had lain, and the special reference to Peter would be an evidence to the backslider that the Lord had already forgiven him. How Peter must have rejoiced when he heard that special message directed *to him!* It meant that in spite of his sin, Jesus still loved him. Perhaps the sinful disciple felt that his denial had forever separated him from his Lord. But now he knew that the Master was still thinking of him kindly, and there was hope for pardon.

Though this message made Peter happy,

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the Lord wanted to give him a more personal consolation, so we come to the second event mentioned above. It was the appearance of Jesus Himself unto Peter. We have no knowledge of the exact time or place of this meeting, the event being left somewhat in the dark by the Gospel writers. There is only one reference made by them to this meeting between Peter and the Lord. When the two disciples came from their walk to Emmaus and entered the room where the other disciples were waiting, the latter said to them, "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon." Merely the fact of the meeting is mentioned. The details are left to be filled in by the imagination. Perhaps the meeting was an unexpected one to Peter. We can imagine something of how the guilty disciple would feel and act. He would be smitten with sorrow and shame as he recalled his sin. He would fall at his Master's feet and tearfully beg His forgiveness. And the Lord would lift him tenderly from the ground and tell him that his sin had been already forgiven. Perhaps a kiss of pardon would be placed upon the disciple's brow. The Lord would speak to the penitent man words of

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warning and kind advice, and then perhaps suddenly vanish. But the heart of the disciple would be filled with joy because the Lord had appeared to him and spoken the words of pardon. The penitent sinner was now the restored apostle.

There is a depth of meaning in the treatment the Lord gave Peter after the denials. It shows how much the Lord loves even the sinner who betrays Him. It shows, too, that the Lord will employ every means for the backslider's reclaim. The wrongdoer who repents of his sin and seeks a better life by association with God's people will surely be met, pardoned, and restored by the Good Master.

### THE MEETING IN GALILEE.

One other scene in the life of Peter deserves notice before we close the first part of his life and begin the second with the scene at Pentecost. It is the meeting in Galilee between the Lord and His disciples. The events which have been considered in the chapters just preceding this occurred in or near Jerusalem. Now the scene shifts back to a familiar place, the Sea of Galilee, near



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which the early life of Peter was spent. Matthew tells us that the eleven disciples returned to Galilee after the appearance of the resurrected Christ in Jerusalem. They did this not only because it was going back home, but also because Jesus had told them to return to Galilee. There in Galilee the Lord again met the disciples. On the day of the meeting seven of the eleven were present. It seems that they had gone back to their old trade of fishing in the Sea of Galilee. This occupation had been proposed by Peter himself, who said, "I go a fishing." The other disciples readily accompanied him. It is not to be supposed that this return to their former occupation was intended by the disciples to be permanent. It was merely for temporary employment until the Master should again come to them, as He had promised. Nor did the disciples have long to wait. One morning as they returned to the shore after a night of hard toil and fruitless, they found the Lord waiting for them. His first word spoken to them was full of significance. He knew the fishermen were tired and hungry after their long season of labor, so He said to them, "Children, have you any meat?"

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His first thought was of their physical wants. Herein is a valuable suggestion as to the method of dealing with needy men. The inner and higher life can be more easily reached after the physical life has been satisfied. Improving man's temporal condition by bettering him socially will open the way to reach more readily the moral and spiritual condition. Jesus first of all fed the disciples. But after they had dined He began to teach Peter higher things. Three times the Lord asked of Peter the question, "Lovest thou Me?" Receiving the affirmative answer, the Lord three times laid upon Peter the grave duty of feeding the flock. Peter had fallen not a great while before, but now he was restored, and the Lord, knowing his mettle, was willing to trust him for the future. How worthy Peter was of that trust we shall see later.

There is a suggestion in this threefold question of the Lord to Peter. The question given three times would probably suggest to Peter the threefold denial of which he had recently been guilty, and reveal to him the danger of placing his confidence in himself. As he faced the future service the basis of

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his strength should not be confidence in himself, but rather love for and dependence upon his Master. Hence the repeated question, "Lovest thou Me?"

One more important lesson the Lord taught Peter in that meeting in Galilee. After giving to Peter the commission to feed the sheep, and after teaching him that his safety was in love for his Master, Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." Obeying this instruction, Peter turned from the seashore and began to walk away in company with the Lord. It seems, too, that John began to follow them, which fact raised a question in the mind of Peter. To the Lord he said, "What shall this man do?" It was as if Peter said, "Lord, why should John be coming after us?" There may be a suggestion of jealousy or of selfishness in the question. There was in it, at least, an unwarranted curiosity. Hence, the answer of the Lord was significant: "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." How easy it is for our actions in the Kingdom of God to be altered or at least colored by the actions of other people. One brother is offended because another brother engages in questionable actions. Another

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can not worship in a certain Church because a supposed hypocrite is there. Another is jealous and says, "Lord, what business has this man to take such a prominent part in the work of the Church?" To all this quibbling Jesus gives the answer: "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." In other words, our responsibility to the Lord is not altered in the least by what another may do or fail to do. We may deplore certain conditions and actions in others, but after all we have an individual responsibility to the Lord and must follow Him in spite of what others do or say.

This incident gives us the last glimpse of Peter in the Gospels. He was probably with the other disciples, however, when Jesus gave them the commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Some time later Jesus was with His disciples in Jerusalem again, and there He taught them concerning their future mission. Then He led them out as far as Bethany, in the neighborhood of which occurred the ascension. "He was parted from them and a cloud received Him out of their sight." The last words of Jesus to His disciples were signifi-

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cant. He said, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye receive power from on high." In the Book of Acts the secret of that power is given in the words, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." In this last message the Lord has given the key to the Church's success and to the individual's power. It is the Holy Ghost. What a vast difference that power made in the life of Peter will be seen in the following chapters.



PART TWO.

THE SEASON OF SERVICE.

(From Pentecost to the Council at Jerusalem,  
51 A. D.)





## CHAPTER XI.

### PETER AT PENTECOST.

THE studies considered in Part One were taken from the Gospels. For the lessons now to be considered we must pass to the Book of Acts. The connecting link between the Gospels and the Acts is the ascension. It is the event last spoken of in the Gospels and first spoken of in the Acts. The ascension closes one era and opens another. The history of Jesus ends and the history of His Church begins. In the Gospels the history centers around one life largely, the life of Jesus. In the Acts the history centers around two men, Peter and Paul. Peter is the chief figure in the first part of Acts, up to the time of the council at Jerusalem, about the year 51 A. D. After that time Peter suddenly drops from view and Paul takes his place as the chief leader in the Church. We are concerned with the character of Peter, however, rather than Paul.

Peter in the Acts is a different man from

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Peter in the Gospels. Pentecost has come in the meantime. Before Pentecost, Peter was an impulsive, vacillating, and even cowardly follower of the Master. But after Pentecost, Peter becomes the wise, bold, and steadfast leader of the Church. Formerly he had been the schoolboy learning his lessons at the feet of a Master, and learning them slowly and poorly. But now he becomes a man asserting himself with a power that is felt in the world. To use a figure Jesus once applied to John the Baptist, formerly he was a reed shaken by the wind. Now he was become not only a prophet, but more than a prophet.

The career of Peter was followed in Part One to the scene of the ascension. That event probably occurred somewhere near Bethany, on the eastern slope of Mt. Olivet. The highest point on Mt. Olivet is about twenty-seven hundred feet above the sea level, and about three hundred feet above the spot occupied by the temple in Jerusalem. This highest point is to-day called the Mount of Ascension, and tradition has it that this is the very point from which the Lord ascended into heaven. But since

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Luke says that Jesus led the disciples out as far as Bethany for the ascension, it is probable that in that neighborhood the Lord was separated from His disciples and caught up into the clouds. The exact spot of the ascension is a matter of uncertainty, to say the least.

From the scene of the ascension the disciples returned to the city of Jerusalem. The Lord had instructed them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. The instruction was heeded and the disciples entered into their period of tarrying. The place of their waiting is a matter of interest. It is said that upon their return to the city the disciples assembled in the Upper Room. The definite article is used, implying that the room was one already familiar to the disciples. It is likely that it was the same room in which the Lord had eaten the last Passover, and tradition asserts that this was the home of the father of John Mark. At any rate, it was a friendly retreat for the disciples. There the eleven assembled to await the fulfillment of the promise. Peter's name appears first in the list in this case, as it did in the Gospel narratives, which

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fact suggests the supremacy he still held among the disciples.

The occupation of the Lord's followers during this period of retirement is important to note. Two features were prominent in their conduct, one being a continuance in prayer, and the other being a certain preparation for future service. Not only did the faithful disciples go to the appointed places of public prayer at the appointed time, but in that Upper Room they continued steadfast in prayer. There might easily have been temptations to forsake their cause and return to their former employment. They might have been discouraged concerning the prospects for the future. But nothing of this nature is recorded. With one purpose and one heart they prayed. What the content of their prayers was we can only guess. No record of those Pentecostal petitions is given us. We may imagine, however, that they would abound in desires for the speedy sending of the Comforter, and for the power that would come from His presence. However that may be, continued prayer at that time is significant. When men are seemingly forsaken and feel their helplessness, prayer is natural. It

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is a real answer to one's need when death comes and takes away a dear one, when misfortune comes and sweeps away property, or when calamity blasts the hopes in life.

But these disciples did more than pray. They prepared for service. They no longer felt that their cause had failed, as they did at the time of the Lord's crucifixion, but they were now looking forward to a future of activity. One act which they performed shows this expectation. It was the choosing of a man to take the place of Judas, who had fallen. The Lord always has some way of filling up the gaps which occur in His Church by the falling away of some of His followers. Churches sometimes have to pass through such seasons of trial that it almost seems that they must perish. Losses come which seem almost fatal. But God in some way atones for the loss. There have been self-important people in the Church, too, who have imagined that if they dropped out the Church would go to pieces. They have dropped out, and to their astonishment the Church has moved steadily on. God filled the gap—if any there was to fill.

The disciples arranged to fill up the gap

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occasioned by the fall of Judas. The method of choosing this new member of the apostolic band was proposed by Peter, who made an address showing that the act of Judas was prophesied in the Scriptures and was one that must needs occur. The fate of Judas was mentioned, but the point that Peter made especially prominent was the necessity of choosing a man to take the place of Judas. Peter quoted the Old Testament Scriptures so freely that we must conclude that he had an intimate acquaintance with them, and we are led to wonder if a part of the time of waiting in the Upper Room was not spent in searching those Scriptures.

The method of election proposed by Peter was to nominate two men and choose one of the two by lot. The two men selected were Joseph, called Barsabas, and Matthias. Nothing is known of these men aside from their connection with this event. After the nomination of these men the disciples engaged in prayer, asking the guidance of God in the final selection. What a splendid precedent! A good prelude to an election always is prayer. If municipal, state, and national elections were the result of prayer we would

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have a different life socially and nationally. In the case before us the selection was by lot. Stones or bits of some material were probably placed in a vessel and drawn by turn. The lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the apostles.

At last the ten days of waiting were past. The final day was the day of Pentecost. The word "Pentecost" having in it the meaning of the "fiftieth," refers to the fiftieth day after the beginning of the feast of the Passover, or more strictly, the fiftieth day after the day in Passover week in which the barley sheaf was offered. This occurred on the sixteenth of Nisan. The Passover began on the fourteenth of Nisan, on Thursday. This would make the sixteenth fall on Saturday. Hence, as some curious people have figured out, Pentecost must have fallen on Sunday, fifty days later.

Upon that notable day the disciples and others to the number of more than one hundred and twenty were assembled with one accord in the Upper Room. It is to be noted that there was complete unity in the assembly. All hearts were as one. The secret of power in any Church is unity of purpose ←

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and effort sanctified by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Where that unity exists the Holy Spirit is likely to be. Hence we are not surprised at the descent of the Spirit upon the waiting and united disciples. The coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by a twofold manifestation. There was a sound and an appearance. The sound was unusual in its volume, being as a rushing, mighty wind. It was not wind, but a sound as of wind. The physical appearance was that of tongues like as of fire. The sound like the wind indicated the active power of the Spirit, while the appearance like tongues of fire indicated the instrument by which the gospel was to be advanced—the human tongue. Together these manifestations indicated that a power mightier than the winds which swept over the sides of Mt. Hermon and shook the cedars of Lebanon was granted to the disciples to loosen their tongues and send them preaching through the nations of the earth, until by the power of that preached Word the nations of the earth should become the Kingdom of our Lord.

The outpouring of the Spirit had an immediate effect upon those present which we



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should note. They were filled with the Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The immediate effect, then, of the coming of the Spirit was the impartation of a new power. The coming of the Spirit into a human life is the secret of the life's power, and provides an equipment for service which would otherwise be impossible. There is no better example of the empowering effect of the Holy Spirit in human life than that of Peter. The coming of the Spirit marked the changing point in his life. Jesus had said to him before, "When thou art changed, strengthen the brethren." Here was the changing time. Formerly Peter had been vacillating and cowardly, but when the Spirit came into his life the coward was changed to the hero and as an apostle became immovable. Peter is a new man. No more does he blaspheme or deny his Lord, but stands with a firmness that will not deny or betray though death come. Look at Peter trembling like a whipped boy in the presence of the damsel on that sad night of denial; then see him at Pentecost, standing before the multitude with fire in his eye and thunder in his voice, ac-

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causing the murderers of Christ to their faces and striking conviction to their hearts until they cry out for forgiveness. Behold that contrast and in it you see the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The writer once heard Dwight L. Moody tell a strange experience. He said that he once went back to a former Church to preach, and used a sermon which he had used there before. After the service a friend came to him and said, "Mr. Moody, why did you not preach us a sermon like that when you were here before?" Mr. Moody said, "Why, I preached the same sermon here." The friend doubted it, but Mr. Moody insisted. "Well," said the friend, "come back and preach it again." Mr. Moody said that he did go back later and preached the same sermon, with the result that near one hundred souls were converted. What was the difference? Mr. Moody explained it by saying that at first it was Moody preaching for the Spirit, but at last it was the Spirit preaching through Moody. The difference was in the power of the Spirit. This is the great lesson of Pentecost—the power of the Spirit. Would we have it we must do as Peter did, wait at

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Jerusalem in prayer. When Cicero was asked for the rules of oratory, he said there were three: First, action. Second, action. Third, action. There are likewise three rules for power with God: First, pray. Second, pray. Third, pray.

But Peter did more than wait. He did more than pray. He used the power when it came. To pray for power to hold without use, while we rust out, is folly. God grants power only to those who will use it. From Pentecost on to his death, Peter used the power. It is worthy of note, too, that all the disciples who received power on the day of Pentecost began immediately to use it as did Peter. The impression prevails that Peter was the only one who did active work on the day of Pentecost. But the fact is that they were all filled with the Spirit, and *all* began to speak with other tongues. All used the power given to them. The truth is that the one condition upon which God grants power is that we use it. If we seek it for any other purpose, we seek it in vain. The gift of the Spirit is sometimes sought as a matter of personal satisfaction, or because the Church urges an effort in that direction.

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Meanwhile the idea of possessing the power for the sole purpose of using it for the glory of God is forgotten. In such a case the seeker need not be surprised if the gift is never received. The motive is wrong. God grants the Spirit for service. Peter at Pentecost seemed to understand this truth and accepted the gift as a new instrument to be used in the Lord's work. How he began to use it will be seen in the next chapter. How he continued to use it will be seen in later chapters. Meanwhile, let us think of Peter as one who has graduated from his school of training and entered the great field of active service, carrying with him that divine credential—the power of the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER XII.

### PETER AS A PREACHER.

THE descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost had an effect upon the disciples and likewise upon those who witnessed the demonstration. It granted to the disciples the supernatural power of speaking in unknown tongues. It stirred the spectators to a desperate attempt to account for the manifestation on natural grounds. The city of Jerusalem was at that time full of people from "every nation under heaven." When these strangers heard the disciples speaking in other tongues than their own, so that every auditor heard in his own familiar language, they showed the perversity of human nature by denying that God had done the strange thing, and declared that it was the work of man. Thus upon the first day of the Church's history there was exhibited one of the chief defects of man's nature. It was that of witnessing the work of God and yet failing to give God credit for it. God is

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visible in the earth, sea, sky, and air. We look at His work daily, yet we fail to realize that we see God in His work. In the spring days the grass begins to grow and the flowers to bloom. The trees take on new foliage, and all nature assumes a new attire. We see it all, but we do not realize that we see God working. We call it nature changing, but it is God working. We see human lives transformed, old defects taken away and new powers given, and we say man has changed. We attribute it to some human agency, but it is God at work.

So these strangers in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost made the mistake of attributing divine manifestations to human agencies. They gave out as an explanation of the supernatural manifestations one of the silliest reasons recorded in any book, and yet the reason was hardly less silly than some more modern attempts to attribute the work of God to the agency of man. The explanation offered was that the disciples were filled with new wine. Think of the foolishness of the assertion! It implied that wine had the power to make a man speak a foreign tongue. It meant that wine could enable a

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Jew to speak the Arabian language, or the Cretan, or the Greek! Would a sane person to-day expect wine to enable an American to speak Spanish or French? It is true that wine can do some strange things, but no one has ever heard of it assisting to an intelligent mastery of foreign languages. Instead of adding sense in speech, wine usually takes it away. The folly of this explanation is, therefore, apparent on the face of it. Nevertheless, it furnished Peter with a text for a sermon, and we soon see the former blasphemer transformed into a fearless preacher and, standing before the hostile crowd, delivering the message in the name of the Master whom he had recently denied. We will notice both the preacher and his sermon. The preacher exhibited several definite characteristics which are worthy of notice.

*He was tactful.* Formerly Peter had woefully lacked tactfulness. He seldom deliberated or reasoned. He acted without thought, by sheer impulse. His former motto was act in haste and repent at leisure. But as Peter stood up to preach on the day of Pentecost he manifested the tact and discretion of a veteran orator. His task was to

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persuade a crowd that was opposed to him. A mistake at the start would throw the people entirely out of touch with him and be fatal to his purpose. But Peter made no mistake. He began his address not by making a statement of his own, but by taking a statement from the mouths of the people themselves. He let them speak through him. The statement referred to is the one concerning drunkenness, already mentioned. It was as if Peter said: "You say these Galileans are drunk. Let us notice your statement a moment." He then proceeded, not to condemn them harshly for their statement, but by the use of cold reasoning, which they were obliged to accept, to show them that their statement was wrong. "It is but the third hour of the day," said Peter. Now, it was the custom of the Jews upon Sabbaths and feast days to refrain from eating or drinking until after the hour of the morning prayer, which was the third hour, or about nine o'clock. Upon this day of Pentecost there would, therefore, be no drinking until after the third hour. It is to this well-known custom that Peter referred. In substance he said to his audience, "You know these men



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do not drink until after the third hour, hence they can not be drunk.”

The explanation which the people had offered being thus overthrown, the way would be cleared for the offering of another and better one. The people themselves would be ready to listen to another. Here was Peter's opportunity. He boldly offered the explanation that this work was by the power of God and not a freak of man. But he did not offer the explanation upon his own authority. Had he done so, his testimony would probably have been rejected. But he offered it upon the authority of the Jewish Scriptures, and in the words of the revered Prophet Joel. Now, the Jews were firm believers in their prophets and in their Scriptures. Their utterances were accepted as almost law. Hence, when Peter quoted Joel, and made him say that this manifestation was the outpouring of the Spirit of God, the people were not ready to deny the explanation. So by this display of tact Peter placed the multitude in sympathy with himself and prepared the way for the other messages he had to bring.

Again, *Peter was Scriptural* as a preacher. In his sermon at Pentecost he

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displayed a splendid knowledge of the prophets and Psalms. He seemed to recognize the truth, which is the key to all effective preaching, that power lies in having a Scriptural foundation for the message presented. In this respect Peter would have made a poor preacher for some modern pulpits. His adherence to the Scriptures would be too close to please the taste of his auditors. To be popular with some modern congregations the preacher must take his text from some recent novel and present a literary essay, or else select some scientific or philosophic subject and deliver a discourse with very little reference to God or the gospel of Jesus Christ. No one ought to object to the preacher using current literature, science, or philosophy to ornament and make attractive his gospel message. But when such incidentals are made a substitute for the gospel itself, while God and the Savior are pushed to the background, a solemn protest ought to go up from the Christian Church. Peter had too much respect for the Scriptures to be guilty of such soulless preaching. This Pentecostal preacher, like the Master whom he served, had a Scriptural ground for everything. The

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Master, in His temptation on the Mount, and in His controversies with His foes, could always protect Himself by saying, "It is written." Peter possessed something of that same ability.

If the question be raised as to how Peter acquired this ability, the answer will suggest itself, in part at least, to the effect that divine inspiration had something to do with it. It is apparent that on the day of Pentecost Peter was unusually inspired by the presence of the Divine Spirit. A part of that inspiration was the illuminating of his mind so that whatever Scripture he had formerly known or heard was brought to his thought though it had been long unused. It was used with telling effect. In addition to this inspiration, it is probable that Peter had added to his store of information during those ten days of waiting in the Upper Room. We know that he spent much time in prayer, and it is likely that his prayer was supplemented by the searching of the Scriptures. At any rate, Peter was familiar with the writings of the fathers. This is the fact of practical importance. It pays to know the Bible. It provides a defense against doubt. It gives

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strength in temptation and comfort in distress. Search the Scriptures. The more we know of the Book, the better Christians we are.

Again, Peter as a preacher *was courageous*. He did not preach at Pentecost for the pleasing of the popular ear. His purpose was not that the people might go away and say that it was a beautiful sermon. He was preaching to show men the need of redemption and the way thereto. Hence, he spoke to those present about their sins; not about sins, but about *their* sins. The sins of the ancients were omitted and those men in Jerusalem were brought face to face with their sins. Peter looked his congregation squarely in the face, and with a voice that had no room for apology hurled the accusation of their guilt upon them. In this respect also Peter would have met poorly the demands of some modern Churches. The preacher of to-day is sometimes required to discourse upon the sins of the patriarchs and boldly denounce the sinners who have been dead for ages, but the sins of the present generation are to be let severely alone. There is a suggestive story told concerning an emi-

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nent minister who paid a visit to a brother minister, and as the visit was to include a Sunday, the visiting minister was asked to preach in the morning service. He consented, and at the hour appointed for the service the two ministers entered the pulpit together. The pastor of the congregation looked carefully over the assembly and then whispered to the visiting minister: "I hope you won't say anything about dancing this morning. Some of my dancing members are present." After a short silence the pastor again whispered to the visiting minister and said, "Please do n't say anything about the theater, because a number of my people attend." Another period of silence followed, and then the pastor said to the visitor, just before he stood to begin his sermon: "Please do n't say anything about drinking. A good many of my men like to take their drinks occasionally." Then the visitor in a perplexed tone asked, "What in the world shall I preach about?" And the pastor answered: "Give it to the Mormons. There are none of them present."

Now, strange and ridiculous as that incident may seem, it illustrates all too truly

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much of the present-day demand in preaching. The great concern seems to be to avoid saying anything about the defects of the people addressed. Yet one of the aims of true preaching is to reveal to men their sins and defects that they may become better. Peter told his hearers of their sins. He said to them in substance, "You men are murderers; murderers, not in the ordinary sense, but you have killed the very Son of God." The accusation went like a knife to the hearts of the people, who in their distress cried out for pardon and salvation. The tactful, Scriptural, and courageous method of Peter was, therefore, effective, as such a method will usually be.

Peter was on this occasion a model preacher, and the sermon which he produced may be called a model sermon. When we study the content of that sermon we discover that its keynote was Jesus Christ. The feeling of Peter seemed to be akin to that of Paul, who determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. Jesus Christ was all that Peter knew in his sermon at Pentecost. He stated four facts concerning Christ.

First, *He was crucified.* No one doubted

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that. But Peter pointed out that His crucifixion was a part of the plan of God. It was done in harmony with the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." It was done because there must be an atonement for the sins of men. The question of the real import of the atonement, that mystery into which the Church has so boldly and foolishly plunged in her theology, was left untouched by Peter. He was content to name merely the fact that the atonement was necessary from the standpoint of God. Jesus was crucified.

Second, *He was raised from the dead.* This was a point the people were not so ready to accept. But Peter made it easy for them to accept it by quoting from their own Scriptures the prophecy of the resurrection. The statement of David was cited, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The testimony of David would not be rejected by the Jews. This Peter knew. And he proceeds to show that the words of David referred not to David himself, but to Jesus, who was crucified.

Third, *He was exalted* by the right hand of God. Peter again manifested his acquaintance with the Scripture when he said, "The

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Lord said unto my lord, sit thou on My right hand." Here the climax of Peter's argument is reached. If this crucified Man was raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God, as the Scriptures taught, He must indeed be the Messiah. Some of the crowd saw the point Peter made. They had murdered the Messiah. They were pricked in their hearts and cried, "What shall we do to be saved?" It was toward this point of conviction and penitence that Peter had been working. He was now ready to make the most important statement of all concerning the crucified Christ. It was:

Fourth, *He is the Way of salvation.* To the guilty murderers of the Lord Peter pointed out the only way of salvation. His sermon, therefore, is the gospel in a nutshell. The crucified, risen, exalted Christ is the only means by which men may be saved.

The aim of Peter's sermon now becomes apparent. In one word, it is *souls*. That is the great aim of all true preaching. He who substitutes any other aim as supreme in preaching has degraded the calling. Lyman Beecher was once asked in his old age this question: "Doctor, you have lived a long



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time and have seen much, and learned many things. What is the chief thing?" He answered, "It is not theology, it is not controversy, it is saving souls." The answer is true. Peter had that conception, and God honored him. Where is the preacher who has had the marvelous results Peter had? Three thousand souls were converted that day! What a revival it was! Jesus had said to Peter, "Upon this rock I build My Church." The building began that day with Peter and his three thousand souls as the rock of foundation upon which the Church was to be built.

Peter's season of service was now begun. He was now a fruit gleaner in a large degree. In the Psalms we are told that "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Peter on that dark night of denial went forth weeping bitterly, carrying with him the seeds of repentance. On the day of Pentecost he came again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Surely a man so honored of God in the beginning of his ministry is one of whom we have a right to expect great things.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### PETER AS A MIRACLE WORKER.

A BUSY and exciting day was Pentecost. The gospel sermon of Peter was followed by fears and wonderings, amidst which many turned to the Lord. The baptism of these new converts followed. Even after the day had ended the disciples were kept busy caring for their converts. But amid their busy times and remarkable experiences they found time to worship. As the Revised Version has it, they continued "steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread at home." This fact applies not only to the case of Peter, but to the other disciples as well. All were busy and all showed the true Christian spirit of worship.

The record states that some time after Pentecost, the exact time being unknown, Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour of prayer. Peter and John! Friends still! The varied scenes through which they had passed had not shaken the friendship be-

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tween these two opposite characters. John had been ashamed of Peter when he blasphemed and denied his Master, but he had remained a loyal friend. Now he was proud of the Pentecostal preacher. It is pleasing to note here a friendship that can outride all the changing fortunes and accidents of life. In all the earth can there be found anything more beautiful than a friendship of this kind? We should rejoice to see such an attachment existing between Peter and John and be glad to meet them again in each other's company. Several times in the Gospels these two men were presented to us as companions. They were together on the Mount of Transfiguration, at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and in the garden of Gethsemane during the Lord's agony. It was Peter and John whom the Lord sent into the city to make ready the Passover. It was Peter and John who ran the footrace to the sepulcher on the resurrection morning. And it is Peter and John still who on this present occasion go up to the temple for prayer.

It was in connection with this visit to the temple that the first miracle of Peter was performed. To understand clearly the mir-

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acle, it will be necessary to notice some facts concerning the temple. The temple in question was the one built by Herod and sometimes called the third temple. The first one was built by Solomon in the golden age of Jewish history. The second one was built by the Jews returning from their captivity in Babylon. The third was the one built by Herod the Great. This temple did not consist of one immense building, as we might imagine, but of a central building, or temple proper, surrounded by a series of courts marked off by terraces and walls. The temple building occupied the highest point of elevation, and from it the terraces sloped downward forming the courts. The outer court, or the one the farthest from the temple, was the court of the Gentiles. It was so called because the Gentiles were allowed to enter it, but could go no further. Next came the court of the women, so named because the women might enter it, but could approach no nearer the temple. Then came the court of the Israelites, into which the males of the nation might enter, and next to this came the court of the Priests, which immediately surrounded the temple proper. There were

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gates opening successively from one court to another. One of these gates was commonly known as the Gate Beautiful. Josephus has a description of one of the temple gates which is believed to be the Gate Beautiful. According to this description the gate was unusually beautiful. It was of Corinthian brass, being thus more excellent than those that were covered with silver and gold. "Its height was fifty cubits and its doors were forty cubits, and it was adorned after a most costly manner." This Beautiful Gate is supposed to have been the one opening from the court of the Gentiles to the court of the women. By this gate, on their way to the temple, Peter and John found a destitute beggar. It can be easily seen that by this gate would be a very wise place for the beggar to place himself, for here he would face all classes of people. The Gentiles would be in the court about him, and the women, the Israelites, and the priests would all have to pass by him as they went toward the inner courts.

When Peter and John met this beggar they found a case of unusual helplessness. The man was born a cripple. We suppose

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he was unable to walk or support himself, because he was laid every day at the gate by his friends. He had doubtless followed this profession of begging for many years. He was a man past forty years of age, and had known nothing but a dependent life in all that time. As Peter and John were passing this beggar of forty years asked of them an alms. He asked as he had asked of hundreds of others, in a mechanical way, perhaps hardly daring to hope that there would be a favorable reply. Perhaps he expected the two men to pass by without a word. But he received a surprising response. The two men stopped and, facing the beggar, Peter said, "Look on us." This was an act that aroused expectation within the breast of the poor beggar. The account says he looked, expecting to receive something. But the next sentence of Peter must have dashed all his hopes to the ground, for Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none." How the countenance of the beggar must have changed! He must have thought that the two men were mocking him, or at least were only going to speak a word of sympathy. But the beggar wanted more than sympathy. Sympathy was

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a good thing, but it would not buy bread. The beggar wanted money, and the man Peter had said he had none. The beggar was disappointed and perhaps in his heart wishing that the men would pass on, when Peter said, "Such as I have give I thee." What! Was something to be given after all? The beggar was now expectant again. What would the gift be? Would it be a coat, a cloak, or a sandal? As the beggar debated in his mind what the gift might be, Peter spake again, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Then the strong hand of the apostle reached forth and grasped the helpless hand of the beggar. A sensation such as had never before been felt thrilled every muscle of the crippled form. The glow of strength and energy which had not been felt in forty years leaped through the shriveled body. The hand that touched the beggar lifted him up. He stood! Those limbs that for forty years had been helpless supported him. He walked! Not a step had he taken in all those years, yet he walked. What an experience! Little wonder he was filled with gratitude and joy! The account says the poor beggar walked with Peter and

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John into the temple leaping and praising God. Like a child who leaps and shouts because of some newly found joy, this man manifested his gratitude as he followed his benefactors into the place of worship. He had asked for an alms. He had received a new life.

Historically this incident is interesting as it reveals such a new and unusual phase of the life of St. Peter. Peter here appears thoroughly at home in handling supernatural forces. As a miracle worker he appears quite different from his former weak and vacillating self. We are reminded again that Pentecost has come in the meantime and Peter is a new creature. But this incident has its spiritual and practical significance as well as the historical. Among its many lessons we may name the following:

First, it is not necessary for men to lie helpless at misfortune's door. There is a divine help which may be claimed and which will furnish relief from much of the misfortune of life. The sufferings and sorrows of men are augmented by two common defects which are observable in the case of this beggar. These defects are, ignorance of possi-



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bilities and the littleness of our requests of God.

The beggar failed to realize his possibilities. He did not understand that before him were representatives of divine power who were able to remove all his distress. It is too often true that men fail to realize the power that is around them and ready to serve them. The fact of God's abiding presence is not felt in its full force. The Master said that He would send the Holy Spirit and that He would abide with us forever. The spiritual Christ as our Burden-bearer, as our Light, our Guide and Wisdom, is ever before us, and yet we live as if in ignorance of the fact. Much of the distress and burden-bearing of our lives would be relieved if we would only appreciate and appropriate the comfort and power of the ever-present Christ.

The littleness of the beggar's request is suggestive of the same defect in many Christian lives. The beggar asked for alms only, while a new life was waiting for him. The Christian often asks of God in the spirit of the beggar, expecting something small—if anything at all. Too often we feel that if

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God will only pardon our sins and hold us in His Kingdom until we die, and then let us slip quietly into the eternal city, we will be satisfied. We want nothing better. And yet God has better things in store for His children. He wants to bestow upon them His riches. He wants them to be not only forgiven, but joyful in His presence and useful in His service. He wants human lives to abound in spiritual blessings and in usefulness. He wants His children to ask largely, putting Him to the test, and His promise is that He will open the windows of heaven and pour out such a blessing that there shall not be room to contain it. With such a God as ours, and with such a promise before us, we ought not to fear to ask largely, nor fail to expect much.

Second, money does not constitute the highest riches. Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none." He was poor in purse, but he was richer than a millionaire. He had riches of a kind not to be measured by silver and gold. Let it never be forgotten that the wealth that is the most valuable is spiritual and eternal. It is the wealth that produces character here and a blessed destiny here-

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after. It is the wealth that enriches the soul. Jesus had these respective values in mind when He said, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" One may possess all the silver and gold of the earth, but if he has not the spiritual wealth that makes the soul beautiful here and safe hereafter, he is as poor as a beggar. The time will come when the man who has spent all his time in getting money will realize its vanity and be willing to exchange his wealth for what Peter possessed at the Beautiful Gate. Here is one of the most foolish mistakes of mankind. Men neglect their own development and the interests of their homes, forget God and spend their energies and time in a wild rush for wealth, and when the time comes for passing into another world they discover with sadness how poverty-stricken they are. It is better to be poverty-stricken in silver and gold, and rich in eternal wealth, than to be poverty-stricken in eternal wealth and rich in silver and gold. To the Church at Smyrna the Spirit said, "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich." Of many so-called poor to-day the Lord can say, "I know thy poverty, but thou

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art rich," for while they have little silver or gold, they are rich in spiritual things.

Third, our duty to the world is measured by what we have to give. Peter said, "Such as I have give I thee." It is our duty to give to the world. Giving in the sense of charity is not here meant. Nor does this incident teach the duty of giving in the sense of charity. It is more of a rebuke to our promiscuous giving than anything else. It implies that there is something better to give than money or clothes. It teaches that it is better to give a needy man a chance to make a man of himself and enter into a life where he does n't need to beg. The duty of society is to give every able man such an opportunity to labor that there will be no occasion for begging. Our duty individually is to contribute to the betterment of the world, yet not in the money sense. How then? *As we can.* Like Peter, we are to give such as we have. The abilities of all men are not the same, hence all men are not expected to benefit the world in the same degree or the same way. Let no one worry because he has not as much of brain or talent to give as has

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another, but let him give freely of such as he has.

Lest these statements seem a little vague, let us be more specific. Every one, regardless of financial or intellectual ability, can make the world better by giving these things:

1. *Kindly consideration for others.* Appreciate the discouragements and struggles of others, and lighten them as much as possible by a friendship that is kind. Do not ignore or despise or provoke, but rather reveal a considerate spirit. Ian MacLaren once said: "Be kind. Every man is fighting a hard battle." It is true. There are in the lives of all burdens and sorrows that are unseen, and this fact makes it all the more needful that every man display a spirit of consideration. Be kind.

2. *An influence for righteousness.* Every life helps to tilt the balance toward righteousness or unrighteousness. When your influence is thrown with the right, you are doing the world a real service. If it is thrown on the side of wrong, you are a real enemy to the world's best interests. Every life is counting one way or the other. Even though

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the influence may seem to be small, it can be thrown on the side of right. Thus every life may give something to the world which is worth while.

3. *A consistent Christian profession.* A powerful contribution to the world's good and to the Kingdom of God is a consistent Christian life. Godly living draws more men toward the Kingdom of God than good preaching. You may not be rich, wise, or eloquent, but if you are consistent in your Christian profession you are making a contribution to the world that may send the thrill of a new life leaping through some sin-crippled soul. Every individual can contribute a holy life to the world—and God asks nothing better. With these opportunities before each life, no one has a right to complain or become despondent. Better would it be to say with Peter, "Such as I have give I thee."

This was Peter's first miracle. Yet it was not Peter's miracle. It was Christ's miracle worked through him. There are some facts connected with it which should not be overlooked.

Peter's faith was the cause of it. He him-

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self explained to the people that it was through faith in the name of Jesus that the man was made whole. (Acts 3:16.)

Christ's power was the agency. Peter disclaimed any credit for the miracle, but asserted that it was done through the power of Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:12, 13.)

Man's health was the result. The helpless man was made whole. In these three facts we see the divine process illustrated. Man's faith secures God's power, and God's power secures man's health.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### PETER PERSECUTED.

THE men who bring things to pass are the men who usually receive the severest opposition. The man who is merely negative and never lets the world feel his presence is not apt to make many enemies or receive much criticism. But the man who is positive and aggressive, and who makes things move, will before long become the target for the opposing shafts of some one. The fact that people oppose and condemn us may be an evidence that we are making ourselves felt in the world. While such opposition may not be conclusive evidence of our importance, it yet has the consoling value of being suggestive of it. People never try to muzzle a dead dog.

Hence it follows that the men who are aggressive in doing good often have to suffer for their efforts. Moses was very much provoked when he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew slave, and he resented the insult by smiting the Egyptian, and in that act he



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struck one of the earliest blows in behalf of human liberty. But Moses had to suffer a long exile because of his aggressiveness. Socrates was a faithful servant of the right. He attempted to elevate the lives of the Athenian youth in his day and prepare them for an immortal existence in the world to come. But he had to drink the poisonous hemlock and die for his trouble. Telemachus shuddered at the inhumanity of the gladiatorial contests and determined to stop them. But his effort toward reform cost him his life. William Lloyd Garrison would remove from his land the stain of human slavery, but he had to pay the price of violence at the hands of the mob. The man to-day who would aggressively oppose evils in the form of intemperance, corrupt social order, or unclean politics will likely meet the fate of serious opposition. It costs something to do the right.

Peter was no exception to this rule. He gave strength and health to a helpless mortal who had not walked for forty years, as we saw in the last study. The poor man leaped with joy because of his recovery and sang the praises of his benefactor. The whole city

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of Jerusalem ought to have rejoiced with him. There were present, however, men who were so evil of heart that they were much grieved because of the miracle of healing. They determined that the man who had done the kindly service should suffer for it. They therefore began a studied persecution of Peter and John. There are three parties named as taking part in the persecution.

The first party was composed of the priests, who were the religious leaders of the Jews and who ought to have rejoiced in any benefit brought to a suffering mortal. But in this case they opposed Peter and John largely because of jealousy. They were sore troubled because these apostles were themselves assuming to be religious teachers and were acquiring considerable influence. The priests assumed to have a monopoly upon the right to give religious instruction, and were unwilling to have the assumed right interfered with. Hence they led the opposition.

The second party was the captain of the temple. Evidently this officer was not the captain of the Roman soldiers stationed in the tower of Antonio, adjoining the temple,

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but was rather the captain of the Jewish guard of the temple. This officer would be himself of the line of the priests and, therefore, would be in sympathy with them. He would also want to quell any possible disturbance about the temple, and since Peter and John furnished the opportunity for some unusual confusion he would be opposed to them.

The third party was the Sadducees, who were opposed to the doctrine of the resurrection, and were grieved at Peter and John because they taught "through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." For this reason they were ready to join the other parties in the opposition.

The enemies, therefore, were many and the opposition was strong. The result was that Peter and John were arrested and placed in confinement over night inasmuch as the arrest occurred late in the evening. Think of it! Arrested and imprisoned for aiding a suffering man and teaching the way of eternal life! From the temple where they had gone to worship these apostles were led as criminals. They were led to a prison cell somewhere in the city, the exact place being

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unknown. An officer's hand thrust them into the prison; an officer's hand closed and locked the door upon them, and they were left alone with the silence and the night.

The disciples were imprisoned, but their enemies could not check the influence of the work they had done. That influence moved steadily on. The interesting statement is made that many that heard the Word believed, "and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." They could lay hands on the preacher, but they could not stop his work. You can destroy the cannon after the shot is fired, but you can not call back the ball as it speeds on its way. You may destroy the instrument after the message is sent, but you can not call back the message as it leaps with lightning speed to its destination. You may put the preacher in bonds, but you can not check the influence of his work. Like the white horse of Gustavus Adolphus II, of Sweden, which dashed over the battlefield of Lutzen long after the rider had fallen from the saddle, the truth which men speak and the influence of their lives moves on and on long after they have fallen from the fight. So was it in the case of

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Peter. The workman had fallen for a moment, but the work moved on.

When the night of confinement in the unknown prison had passed and the morning had come, Peter and John were brought forth for trial. The account says that the rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem. The statement refers to the meeting of the Sanhedrin, which was in reality the supreme court of the Jewish people. The Sanhedrin had authority to pass upon all cases, both civil and religious. It had the power to pass any sentence, even the sentence of death. But there its power ended. It did not have the power to execute the death sentence, inasmuch as the Roman Government reserved for itself that right. Hence, while the Sanhedrin could condemn, it could not kill.

This court desired to establish the charge of heresy against Peter and John. Hence the question was put to them, "By what power or by what name have ye done this?" Their expectation and desire was that Peter and John would answer that it was in the name of Jesus of Nazareth that the man had been healed, and on the strength of that as-

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sersion they intended to make the charge of heresy. But the answer was given with such boldness and so much more completely that they were somewhat confused. Peter replied not only that the work was done in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, but also added, "Whom ye crucified" and "whom God raised from the dead." Here was not only heresy in the eyes of the Sanhedrin, but a charge against them of murder, and an assertion of the hated doctrine of the resurrection. There was such a display of boldness that they were astonished. And yet the evidence was all on the side of Peter and John. There stood the healed man. They could not deny the fact that he had been healed. If the healing had not been done by the power of Jesus of Nazareth, they could not explain how it had been done. Public sympathy was aroused for the disciples. The members of the Sanhedrin were in an embarrassing condition. They could not undo what had been done. Since Peter and John were so bold, they feared to take any new steps lest they might make matters worse for themselves and better for Peter and John. They finally concluded that the quietest way out of the difficulty was the

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best. So after a few moments of private consultation, the Sanhedrin decided that the best thing to do would be to exact from Peter and John a promise that they would not teach or heal in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and grant them their liberty upon that condition. But the Sanhedrin little knew the mettle of the men with whom it was dealing. When the apostles were charged to observe silence, Peter again manifested his boldness by replying, "We can not but speak of the things which we have seen and heard." Again the plans of the Sanhedrin were defeated. But though they were desperate, they were shrewd. They had judgment enough to see that their case was hopeless inasmuch as the people were with the apostles, and "glorified God for that which was done." There was but one resort left for the Sanhedrin—a resort which is often sought by those whose cause is weak—a threat. So they threatened Peter and John, and let them go.

In this incident there are some phases of Peter's changed character which stand out prominently. Notice his boldness as contrasted with his former cowardice. It took

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a high degree of boldness to stand before an assembly such as Peter faced and speak as he did, a charge of murder against them. If we seek the source of the boldness we will find it suggested in that verse which says that Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost. (Acts 4:8.) This was the secret of his boldness and power. It was not Peter speaking after all. It was the Holy Ghost speaking through Peter. A great divine has well expressed it by saying it was "Peter multiplied by Deity." No one can measure the power of a life filled by the Holy Ghost. It is personality multiplied by divinity. The real strength of any Church or individual depends upon that one thing, the filling of the Holy Spirit. Possess that and no one can prophesy to what lengths the influence of Christian work may go.

The effect of Peter's boldness is made prominent here. Those who observed him took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus. Association with the Master left its stamp upon these apostles. Companionship with Jesus produces its marked effects. It stamps the life. One of the best compliments that can be paid a follower of the Master is



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to say of him that his life shows that he has been in fellowship with Jesus and has learned of Him.

A new criterion for Peter's life is also revealed in this incident. A new measure of his conduct is revealed in the expression, "Whether it be right." Prior to Pentecost Peter had acted from impulse and desire. Now he acted from a conviction of what was right. The sublimest criterion for a man's life is this adopted by Peter, "Whether it be right." The ordinary standards are much lower than that. We often make pleasure the measure of action. If a certain act will bring us personal enjoyment, we will perform it. If not, we will leave it undone. Sometimes the question, Is it popular? controls our conduct. If a certain course will meet the approval of the popular crowd we will follow it. If it would receive the disapproval of the multitude, we leave it untouched. The question of what is right has too small a place in our lives. Or again, we are swayed in these days by the consideration, "Is it profitable?" If there is money in it, we will act. If there is a possibility of loss, we will refrain, however right and just

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the cause may be. Let it be noted, however, that Peter never asked what was pleasant, popular, or profitable. His sole aim was to know what was right. Knowing the right, he was ready to do it, regardless of cost.

We notice here also the fire of conviction in the character of Peter. As spokesman for John and himself, he said, "We can not but speak." Convictions must be expressed. Peter now belonged to the class of men who must speak their convictions though death be the result. O, for more men of that type! These are the kind of men who move the world. "We must speak," said Peter. "Threaten us if you will. Put us in prison if you want. Lead us to the cross if you must. But we must speak the truth that burns within us." That truth in Peter's thought was so vital and so urgent that it must find expression at all hazards. History shows that those men who have been a benediction to the world are the men who have been set aflame by their convictions. William Lloyd Garrison felt the burning of conviction when he said, "I will not excuse, I will not equivocate, I will not retract a single inch, and I will be heard." He, like Peter,

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must be heard. And the burning truth he uttered helped to remove from our history the blot of human slavery. In the religious world we need that fire of truth, that kind of conviction. The Kingdom would be more advanced if we had more of that brand of men whose minds and hearts are so full of the gospel truth that they must speak what they have seen and heard and felt.

Contrast the practice of many lives in the Church to-day with the example of Peter here given. Peter must speak. He could not keep still. He bubbled over. But some people to-day have to be pleaded with, coaxed and persuaded before they speak a word of religious truth or experience. Some people can sit all through a praise service and instead of feeling that it is their duty to speak, seem to feel that duty lies in keeping silence. It ought not so to be. The Church needs badly the spirit of Peter. It needs the spirit that will make her membership bold in utterance, right in standards of living, and enthusiastic in the expression of convictions.

This event, then, furnishes another evidence of the radical change that was wrought in Peter; a change that made it possible for

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him to strengthen his brethren even as Jesus had instructed. The strength of the testimony to the change as found in this incident lies in the fact that here Peter was tested at a weak point where formerly he had failed. It was at the point of ability to stand in the face of suffering and persecution. Peter formerly stood well enough until he came to the danger of having to suffer for his loyalty to Jesus. There he failed. Now, however, he is willing to face suffering, and even death if need be. He is a new man ready for a larger service.

In this changed life we see a pledge of what is possible in every life. Old sins, old weaknesses, old defects may pass away and all things become new. The great Pompey once boasted that with a stamp of his foot he could call all Italy to arms. It was a mighty boast. But our God without boast does a mightier thing. He sendeth forth His word and a new life is called into existence; a transformed life without sin and condemnation, but full of truth and power. The coward becomes the hero, and the sinner becomes the saint. Such a changed life is the possible heritage of every soul.

## CHAPTER XV.

### PETER GOD'S EXECUTIONER.

ONE of the clearest evidences of the possession of the Christ spirit is the absence of selfishness. The more of the Christ spirit one possesses, the more unselfish he becomes. It is interesting to note to what a large degree this spirit of unselfishness was possessed by the early Christians, and how it was manifested. In Acts (4:32) we find these remarkable words, "And not one said that aught of the things he possessed was his own." (R. V.) Those early disciples seemed to feel that when they became Christians they entered a community of brothers where all were in a sense equal, and where self-interest and self-possession were lost. What belonged to one seemed to belong to all. They were of one heart, one soul, and one property. The most striking evidence of this unselfish spirit was the surrender of personal property to be the property of all. Such as were possessed of houses and lands, sold them and brought

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the price of the sale and laid it in money at the apostles' feet. It must have been a strange sight to behold men and women who had struggled perhaps for years for the accumulation of property, sell out that property and, instead of using the money for traveling, or buying a summer home, or investing it where it would bring a large rate of interest, surrender it all into a common fund, from which the needs of all were to be satisfied. Yet such a practice seems to have been common, and was probably frequently witnessed among the believers, who came soon to number about five thousand. Here was a company of men and women five thousand strong in which there was no struggle one against the other for bread. There was no conflict of the weak against the strong. There was no competition by which one man struggled to outclass his neighbor. There was no exalting of some in luxury while others remained in poverty. They had all things common. But the remarkable thing about that communism was that it was entirely *voluntary*. There is no reference made in the ancient records of any apostolic requirement to sell all personal property and

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create a common fund. It is true that Jesus said to the rich young ruler that he should sell all that he had and give to the poor. Yet that was a specific requirement to meet a specific need, and was never cited by the disciples as an instruction to be universally followed. We rob this early Christian communism of its beauty if we consider it anything other than voluntary. Indeed, Peter implies that it was entirely a voluntary matter when he says to Ananias, "While it remained was it not thy own? And after it was sold, was it not in thy power?" He thus implies that it was within the power and right of Ananias to do with his property as he might choose. He was not obliged to offer it to the common fund. Hence this communism was just a spontaneous expression of the brotherly love that filled the hearts of the early Christians when they received the Holy Spirit. Self-love died. They lived for and loved others. It was natural that they should express their love in some way, hence they sold out personal interests and gave to the common good. In a word, interest in the brotherhood predominated over interest in self.

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There have been those who assert that this communistic band was a type of what Christian society should be, and efforts have been made to form commonwealths on such a basis. Whatever our opinions may be concerning such attempts, or concerning communism itself, we must all confess that the original Christian spirit was communistic. Unselfishness and brotherly love reigned supreme. And we must also confess that this same spirit must predominate when the Kingdom of God comes upon earth. Christian communism is one of the things of which Jesus said, "Ye can not bear them now," and yet it is not a wild speculation to suppose that it will come in the course of time. The ills of society to-day are caused largely by man placing his finger on a certain object and saying to his fellow-man, "Hands off, this is mine." Let us hope that the time will come some day when "mine" will be changed to "ours" and men in society will say, "This is ours—and God's."

There is one striking example given of a man who sold out all he had and gave the proceeds to the common fund. It was Barnabas, who afterward became the traveling



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companion of Paul. Barnabas was probably a large land owner, and seems to have been a man of considerable influence because of his wealth. Yet all that he had he sold and laid the price of the sale at the feet of the apostles. As we are delighted to-day when a rich man gives a large sum of money for a college or a Church or to found a library, so the early Christians were delighted with the gift of Barnabas. His fame spread abroad, and everybody was talking of his magnificent sacrifice and the pure Christian love that prompted it. It is easy to see that there might be some people who were a little envious of Barnabas, and who wished that they might be as favorably spoken of as he. Such a feeling may have possessed Ananias. He saw how Barnabas was adored, and perhaps craved a little of the esteem for himself. Love of popularity often carries men to an unreasonable extreme. Ananias went to an extreme. Perhaps he reasoned that since the selling of property and giving of the proceeds to a common fund had made Barnabas popular, a similar act on his part would accomplish for him the same result. Then the possibility suggested itself to him of selling

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his property and turning over to the apostles only a part of the proceeds, making them believe that the full price had been surrendered. The apostles would never be the wiser, he thought, and his fame would be just as great, perhaps, as if he should give over the entire amount. Thoughts like these doubtless went through the mind of Ananias, and as a result he planned his lie against the Holy Spirit. Before carrying out his plan, however, he let his wife into his secret, and together they decided to sell out and turn over a part of the money, yet leaving the impression that the whole amount was being given up. It is important to notice the motive which seemed to be back of this action. The sale was not prompted by love for others or for God, but rather by a desire to appear Christian and stand in favor with the people. They would appear Christian when in reality they were at heart selfish and worldly. It was an act of hypocrisy. Their evil scheme was carried out as planned. The land was sold and, likely with some parade, the money was brought and laid before the apostles and the people given to understand that the full amount had been surrendered.

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The result of the act was not what was expected. God can not be deceived. Neither could Peter, who was filled with the Holy Ghost, be deceived. He detected the lie, and proceeded to administer a terrible rebuke. The rebuke fell first on Ananias, as his wife was absent when the offering was presented. Peter condemned Ananias by saying to him that Satan had filled his heart. He pointed out to the erring man that his lie was one not merely before men, but before God. He had lied to the Holy Ghost. With such stern utterances Peter publicly exposed the hypocrisy. The effect of the rebuke was the same as if a blow had been struck with God's sword in the hand of Peter as God's executioner. Ananias dropped to the floor dead, his life given as a penalty for his lie. Immediately his body was taken up, the burial shroud wound around him, and he was carried out to his grave. There is nothing unusual in the seeming hasty burial, inasmuch as it was the custom among the Jews to bury on the day of the death, and often within three or four hours after the death.

According to the account, it was something like three hours after the death of

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Ananias when Sapphira, his wife, came in. She came in ignorance of the fate that had overtaken her husband. She came as guilty as he. Peter said to her, "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much." The reference was doubtless to the amount Ananias had offered to the apostles. Sapphira answered, "Yes." She by word of mouth added her lie to the deception of her husband. A double tragedy was the result. Peter answered her lie by saying, "Behold, the feet of them that buried thy husband are at the door and shall carry thee out." And Sapphira, at that thrust of the sword in the hands of God's executioner, fell down dead.

At first glance this seems like a harsh proceeding, and we feel inclined to criticise Peter for the act. But it must be remembered that it was not the act of Peter so much as the act of the Holy Spirit through Peter. Peter was simply the executioner in the hands of the Spirit. And if the act of the Spirit seems severe, we must remember that the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira came at a time when deception could not be tolerated in the Church of God. It was at the very beginning of Christianity, and the

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purity of the Church must be preserved at all hazards. Members within must be made to realize the sacredness of their profession, and those without must be taught the danger of dishonestly insinuating themselves into the fellowship of the Church. Severe measures were demanded, for the times were critical. There are similar cases on record where God had to take life to teach needed lessons. Nadab and Abihu were slain for offering up strange fire. Achan was slain for stealing the Babylonish garment. In both these cases the sin committed was of a nature that demanded a severe rebuke in order to save the morals of the chosen people. So, too, Sapphira and Ananias were slain for lying to the Holy Ghost, lest their act unrebuked might encourage a corruption in the new Church which ultimately might bring it to ruin. The effect felt immediately by the Church, and by those outside the Church, justified the means. The account says that great fear came upon all the Church and upon as many as heard these things. The Church feared to pretend or to deceive. The world feared to trifle with the Holy Spirit, the life of the Church.

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Let us notice the significance and result of this sin. It was the sin of hypocrisy practiced by deed rather than by word. This was true especially in the case of Ananias. It is just as sinful in the sight of God to be a deceiver by deed as by word. There are many people in the Church who make the statement that they do not like to get up in a prayer or class meeting and offer a testimony for fear they might *say* something that would seem inconsistent and then they would appear as hypocrites. That is without doubt a worthy fear, if it is honest. But the strange thing to be noted in this connection is that so many of those same people go out into the world and *act* in a way that is inconsistent and do not seem in the least disturbed by the hypocrisy which attaches to their acts. But in reality there is no difference. Hypocrisy acted is as bad as hypocrisy spoken. In the sight of God, hypocrisy is hypocrisy, whether it be spoken or acted; whether it be exhibited in the Church or in the world. One who acts in an inconsistent way in the world ought to hesitate a long while before offering as an excuse for not testifying in public the statement that he

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does not want to appear inconsistent or hypocritical.

God despises the spirit of hypocrisy. This is one of the great lessons in the fate of Ananias. That fate shows God's contempt for the hypocrite. The spirit of Ananias is herein condemned, yet it is alarmingly easy to exhibit that spirit. There are many ways in which one may almost unconsciously exhibit that hypocritical spirit. For example, association with a Church as a member gives one a respectable standing in a community, and sometimes is even the means of increasing trade for a business man, hence it is easily possible for people to unite with a Church and profess a religious life for the sake of these advantages. Such persons, however, are not religious for religion's sake, but for the sake of worldly advantage. Again, liberality is commendable to-day, as it was in the days of Ananias and Barnabas, hence it is possible for people to give liberally, not because they love the cause, but because of the credit that may come from such liberality. And sometimes, too, people lay claim to a higher degree of spiritual life than they really possess, and thus become guilty

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of a phase of hypocrisy. In all of these ways and in many others it is possible to exhibit something of the spirit of Ananias and offend the goodness of God.

The natural result of such pretense is the fate of Ananias—death. It is death, not physical, but spiritual. Whenever one departs from the path of strict honesty with God he begins a journey toward death. Deception and spiritual power can not exist in the same life. Therefore, be honest with God. Do not keep back part of the price you assume to give the Lord. If you have promised the Lord your life, give it to Him and do not divide it between Him and the enemy of your soul. If you have promised Him service in any department of the Church work, give it to Him and do not cheat Him out of time and talent. Do not serve self and forget God and the Church. Be sure of this, that the time is coming some day when every pretense will be discovered and exposed. If that time be not before, it will be at the bar of God. Be honest with God. The one who practices dishonesty always gets the worst of the bargain.

A little berry-peddler called one morning



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at a home and said to the lady of the house, "Do you want to buy any berries to-day?" The little fellow was poorly clothed and his feet were travel-stained, but his heart was rich and true. He carried on his arm a basket of fresh, large raspberries, which looked inviting as they lay beneath the green leaves partially covering them. Telling the boy she needed some berries, the lady took the basket from him and carried it into the house to measure out the desired amount. The boy did not follow her to witness the measuring, but amused himself with some canaries that hung in a cage by the door. When the lady returned she said to the boy, "Why did you not come in and see if I measured your berries aright? I might have cheated you." The boy only smiled and said, "I am not afraid, for you would get the worst of it." "Get the worst of it?" exclaimed the lady; "what do you mean?" "Well," said the boy, "I would only lose my berries, but you would lose your honor. Do n't you think you would get the worst of it?" The philosophy of the boy was sound. The one who attempts deception, whether it be on man or God, gets the worst

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of the bargain. 'Tis better always to be the one deceived than the one deceiving. The words which Shakespeare causes Polonius to speak to his son Laertes are worth being remembered by every Christian:

This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

And we may add, "Nor to God."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### PETER IN PRISON.

THE sad fate of Sapphira and Ananias, while it was terrible in itself, had a splendid effect upon the disciples and people alike. It not only taught every one the danger of hypocrisy, but it brought the religion of Jesus Christ before the people in a favorable way. It taught the valuable lesson that Christianity was a system which could not tolerate immorality. The power of Peter was also magnified in the eyes of the people by the miracle worked through him. The result was that there was a remarkable migration of the people to the standard of the apostles. The account says that believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. The fame of Peter was heralded abroad. The people some way believed that he who had been God's executioner in dealing out justice could also be God's minister in dealing out mercy. So to him the people brought the sick and those troubled with evil

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spirits. These afflicted people were laid on beds or couches in the streets, that the shadow of Peter might fall on them as he passed. There was a faith among the people that there would be a healing power in even the shadow of this wonderful man of God.

Here is the highest tribute that thus far has been paid to Peter by the people. It meant that in their eyes he had become so much like his Master that, as there was virtue found in touching the Master's garment, so there would be virtue found in lying within the shadow of the apostle.

Some critics have pointed out the fact that Luke in this account does not say specifically that the people were healed by lying in the shadow of Peter, and they therefore deny that any miracle was here performed. They assert that all that Luke says is that the people *expected* to be healed. They would thus rob this incident of its significance. Yet the implication clearly is that the people were healed. In the verse immediately following the one in which mention is made of the shadow, the statement is made that there came also a multitude out of the cities round about Jerusalem bringing their

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sick, "And they were healed every one." This statement about the people being healed evidently applies to the people within the city as well as to those brought from without. There should really be no hesitation about believing that the people were healed by the shadow as well as by other methods employed by Peter. This interpretation should not be difficult for those to accept who believe in miracles at all, and especially so when we remember that the healing in all these cases was not so much the work of Peter as the power of God working through Peter. The account clearly indicates that those who were healed were those who had great faith, hence the healing was an act by which God honored the faith of those who believed.

There is a practical significance in this shadow-healing which should not be overlooked. There is a sense in which a shadow falls from every life for the healing or hurting of other lives. A secret power which we call influence goes out from each life to touch other lives. There are some lives whose very presence is a blessing to us, so that we crave their companionship and feel a sense of loss when they are taken from

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us. Their shadow has fallen on our lives to bless us. But on the other hand, there are some lives which are almost a curse to us. They arouse the evil rather than strengthen the good. Their presence is a disturbing influence to us, and we feel relieved when they are gone. The shadow falls from such lives, but in a hurtful way. Thus every life casts its own shadow for hurt or help. Mrs. Ballington Booth, while once doing some faithful and effective work among the prisoners at Sing Sing, was suddenly taken very ill, and it was reported that she would have to die. During her illness her husband received a note from one of the prisoners who was waiting to have the death sentence executed upon him. The note read: "I do not belong to the Volunteer Prison League, but your wife's presence here has transformed this place in such a way that I feel good in spite of myself. When I heard she was going to die I wanted to pray that she might get well, but now that the warden has told me that she will get well, my heart is so full of joy that I can die in peace." The shadow of the good woman's life had fallen over the life of the bad man and had cured some of the

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pain of his condition. When the saintly Florence Nightingale walked past the cots on which the wounded soldiers lay, her shadow falling upon them was like the spreading of an angel's wing over them, and that shadow was balm for the healing of many an aching heart. There are many such lives. They bring peace with them, and healing dwells in their shadow.

Peter was persecuted because there was healing in his shadow. The head of the persecution in this case was the high priest. He and those with him were filled with jealousy because Peter was becoming more of an idol with the people than they. Great is the selfishness and cruelty of jealousy! It would deprive the people of blessings and permit them to sit in pain rather than sacrifice a little popularity! So the high priest laid hold of Peter and the other apostles and placed them in the common prison. This is the second time since Pentecost that Peter has been imprisoned. The first time was because of the healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful. In this second case it is also because of a healing work. These facts show the utter desperation to which the

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enemies of Christianity were driven in their efforts to destroy the rising faith. Although the new faith exhibited itself as an angel of mercy to suffering men, it must be suppressed lest its advocates secure greater popularity than the leaders of the old faith!

Nothing is told us concerning the place of Peter's imprisonment save that it was the common or public ward. But wherever it was, the apostles were not destined to remain long within its walls, for the Lord had planned an escape for them. The account says merely that the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors. A great deal of speculation has arisen among critics as to the manner in which the doors were opened. Some have supposed that a peal of thunder sprung the lock. Others have suggested that an earthquake threw the doors ajar. Still others think that some friend appeared and unlocked the doors. But it is safe to follow the account as given. It reveals the care that God has for them that put their trust in Him. The Word tells that He will with every temptation make a way of escape. Some way which we may not be able to see is provided. When the high priest locked Peter up, he supposed his victim to



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be fully within his power. It has been said that man proposes, but God disposes. So it was in this case. The persecutors proposed, but God disposed. God disposed of the case in a way surprising to the persecutors. It was by delivering the victim entirely out of their hands. He unlocked the prison doors and the captives were set free.

It will be observed that God never delivers His people without a purpose. He liberated Peter, not that he might be idle, but that He might send him on a mission. The delivering angel said to him, "Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." The expression "this life" means the Christian life or the new life in Christ. Peter's commission, therefore, was to preach and heal in the name of Jesus, just as he had done before his imprisonment. New evidence of the transformed nature of Peter is seen in the willingness with which he obeyed this command from the Lord. It involved danger and required courage to obey. But Peter never hesitated. He "entered the temple early in the morning and taught."

The high priest, being in ignorance of the escape of his prisoners, called an early meet-

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ing of the council the following morning, and sent to the prison to have the apostles brought to trial. But when the messengers returned and reported the prison empty, the high priest and his helpers were much distressed and wondered whereunto the matter would grow. But they were not turned from their evil purposes, and hearing that the apostles were teaching in the temple, they sent the captain of the temple with his officers to bring them to trial. The significant statement is made that they brought the apostles without violence, because they feared the people. In that brief statement is revealed the respect the rulers have for the voice of the people. The people have only to make their voice heard to be guaranteed a hearing from the rulers. Reforms in history have frequently been the result of the voice of the people. Corruption exists largely because the people do not assert themselves and let their voice be heard. It may be accepted as a law that when the people speak with a positive voice, the rulers will listen and heed.

The trial of the prisoners began. Jesus had taught these men that they should be

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brought before the councils for His sake, but that he that endured to the end should be saved. That prophecy was here fulfilled, and Peter in this case indicated that he intended to be one of the saved because he was faithful to the uttermost.

The charge brought against the apostles was, that in spite of the warning of the high priest they had continued to teach the gospel of Jesus. The evident purpose of the arrest was that the apostles might be so intimidated that they would cease their preaching and teaching. But that they were not to be thus frightened from their work was shown by the position taken by Peter. That position was revealed in the simple declaration, "We ought to obey God rather than man." Peter then followed that declaration of principle with a sermon. It was a sermon worthy of study. The Bible student is struck by the similarity between this sermon and the one preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Preachers are sometimes criticised to-day for repeating a sermon, but there is a precedent for such a practice in the case of Peter. This sermon was almost a repetition of the one at Pentecost. The two were built up on prac-

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tically the same outline. The points made in the former sermon were: the people had killed the Son of God; God had raised Him from the dead; God had highly exalted Him; Jesus was the only means of pardon and salvation. Exactly the same points are made here, though not in exactly the same order. (Acts 5:30-32.)

The two sermons are, therefore, similar in substance. Peter, however, in this sermon emphasized an additional point, namely, that the apostles were witnesses of these things together with the Holy Ghost. Being witnesses, they must speak. This was Peter's argument. It meant that the injunction of the high priest and his followers was not to be heeded. The result may be easily imagined. The persecutors were angered and sought to slay Peter and his companions. One thing transpired, however, to save them. It was the logic of Gamaliel, an ancient doctor of the law, held in high esteem among the people. The argument briefly stated was that the court should not concern itself unduly about the apostles for the reason that if their work was of man, it would naturally come to naught as other similar movements

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had done. But if the work were of God, it could not be overthrown, and it would only be fighting against the will of God to attempt it. This logic prevailed, and after the apostles had been beaten and commanded to teach no more in the name of Jesus, they were liberated. The logic of Gamaliel is good to apply in all cases where the question of the value of certain religious movements arises. False theories may be advanced; objectionable movements may be started. But the Christian worker need not worry unduly. If God is not in them, the theories and movements will come to naught. If God is in them, they must live.

The result of this persecution against Peter and the apostles is revealed in the words, "They ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." The persecution was fruitless. Never has violence been the means of checking Christianity in its marvelous growth through the years. The result of such a method has always been the same as in this case, namely, increased strength for the oppressed cause. Those early experiences of the apostles were, therefore, prophetic in a twofold way.

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First, they were prophetic of the perpetual opposition that awaited the cause of Christ. Never has Christianity been free from opposition. Christianity means a crusade for right in the highest sense. A crusade for the right always provokes opposition. Sometimes the opposition will come from those of whom it is least expected, but it will come. If the ancient apostle received his opposition in the manner then in vogue, the modern disciple will receive his after the manner of his day, though the manner be vastly changed. Modern opposition is more subtle, but it is as real. It does not incur the risk of life, but it incurs the risk of principle. It demands again the spirit that can say, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Second, these experiences were prophetic of the perpetual success that awaited the cause of Christ. It is an apparent truth that kites rise against and not with the wind. So has it been with Christianity. Her opposition has been the opportunity for her rise. To the Christian who knows the history of the past there is no discouragement in the fact that opposition exists. Jesus Himself

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foretold that condition. But He likewise foretold that His cause should prevail until every tongue should confess Him Lord. In Browning's "Pippa Passes" there is an expression used which expresses the faith which every Christian ought to possess, despite opposition and hardships, and the faith which all the history of God's Kingdom in the past fully justifies:

"God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### PETER IN SAMARIA.

THE imprisonment of Peter, which was presented in the last chapter, was followed by two or three important incidents, according to the account given by Luke. The Church membership increased rapidly, and new needs arose with the increased membership. Collections for the poor were needed, and were taken and distributed among the unfortunate. This charitable work grew to such dimensions that it was impossible for the apostles to attend to it and also to do the work of the ministry. Their conviction was that they should attend to the spiritual part of the Church work, but that others should be chosen to look after the temporal affairs, or as they expressed it, to serve at tables. Certain assistants were therefore chosen, whose duty it was to aid in spreading the gospel by managing the temporal affairs connected with the Church life, while the apostles were left free to preach the Word



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and attend to the spiritual work. These assistants were seven in number and were called deacons. Among the seven were two whose names are important, Stephen and Philip. Stephen's career seems to have been a short one. Because of his aggressiveness he received the bitterest opposition from the enemies of Christianity, and was finally tried and stoned to death. Dr. Parker, of London, once called attention to the fact that this grave of Stephen was the second one dug thus far in the history of the Christian Church. The first one held the remains of Sapphira and Ananias. In the first lay victims smitten by God's thunderbolts because of their hypocrisy. In the second lay a faithful disciple smitten by the anger of men because of loyalty to God. Over the first no tears were shed. Over the second loud lamentations were made by saintly men. Sapphira and Ananias died with the blackness of despair in their faces, and fell into hopeless graves. Stephen died with a divine light on his countenance, which made it appear like an angel's face, and he was laid away in a grave bright with hope. Those two graves, as extreme as they are, mark the destinies of

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all men. The grave of the unfaithful or the grave of the loyal will be the destiny of every man. The character of the present is determining the grave of the future. From the grave of the future will grow the flower of eternal destiny—the destiny of salvation or of destruction.

Following the death of Stephen, a general persecution was begun against the Church at Jerusalem, insomuch that its members were forced to scatter abroad among the neighboring provinces and cities. The scattering, however, was only a means of spreading the new gospel, and thus the persecution, which was intended as an injury, proved to be a friend to the new cause, aiding in its advancement. Philip, whose name in importance stands side by side with Stephen's, was evidently driven by this persecution to the city of Samaria. This city lay about forty miles northward from Jerusalem. It will be remembered that the Samaritans were a mixed race of people, foreign blood having been mixed with and made to predominate over the Jewish. The Samaritans had adopted the Jewish religion, but had mortally offended the Jews by establishing

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an independent priesthood and form of worship. These people did not possess all the religious prejudices of the Jews, hence could more readily accept the teachings of the new sect of Christians. We are not surprised, therefore, to discover that Philip had great success in Samaria. The account says that the multitude gave heed with one accord when they heard Philip and saw the signs he performed. Many believed and were baptized. When the apostles back at Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had believed and received the gospel, they sent a delegation of their own number to that city to care for the new converts and continue the work. This action on the part of the apostles was the part of wisdom and showed their desire that the growth of the gospel might become permanent.

The delegation sent to Samaria was composed of Peter and John. We have reason to believe that these two men were the choice of the apostles to carry on the work in Samaria, inasmuch as the account says the apostles sent them. There was in all probability a meeting called and a discussion of the men to be sent. The mission was an im-

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portant one, and the sense of the apostles was that the proper ones to be sent were those two men, who had stood so close to Jesus in His life, and who had become so prominent in the work of His Kingdom since His departure. So Peter and John, those two who had for so long been bosom friends, were sent.

The significance of this mission should be noted. Here were two Jews sent by Jews to minister to formerly despised Gentiles. The Jews had a contempt for all Gentiles, but especially for the Samaritans. The bitter feeling existing between the Jews and the Samaritans may be understood by recalling the conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria at the well of Sychar. When Jesus asked a drink of the woman, she was surprised and said, "How it is that Thou . . . being a Jew, asketh a drink of me . . . for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans?" And when the disciples returned and found Jesus talking with the woman they, too, were surprised, and marveled at the sight. Prejudice in the case was deep-seated. Yet in spite of the old hatred we here see two of the very disciples who had marveled going

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to those same despised Samaritans to minister to them. What was the cause of this great change? Now the wall of partition between the Jews and other nations was broken down. How had it happened? The secret was that these men had caught so much of the spirit of the Master that their prejudices had been removed and they were willing that the benefits of the gospel should be received by the Gentiles as well as themselves. Herein we see the inevitable effect of the possession of the spirit of Jesus. It reduces our pride, destroys our prejudices, places unfortunate people in favor before us, and makes us feel that in spite of poverty, position, or misfortune, all men are our brothers.

It is important to notice the work of these delegates to Samaria. Two special features of their work are prominently mentioned. The first is the invoking of the Holy Spirit.

We meet a strange fact here. The Samaritans were converted and were baptized, but had not yet received the Holy Spirit—in His fullness, at least. This fact is suggestive and likewise destructive to some theories frequently held. It shows that there is no essential relation between baptism and the gift

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of the Holy Spirit. It is sometimes claimed that baptism is the act by which the Holy Spirit is given. But here is a case where many were baptized and the Spirit was not given. A little later we shall see that in Cæsarea certain ones were converted and received the Holy Spirit without being baptized. Hence we have both extremes, baptism without the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit without baptism. There can, therefore, be no essential relation between the two.

More than baptism by water is necessary to fit one for discipleship. Baptism by the Holy Spirit is also needed. If, as we are sometimes told, baptism is the great essential, why should there have been in this case an invoking of the Spirit? It would be difficult to find a stronger statement of the insufficiency of baptism than the one made in connection with this case, "Only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." They had "only" been baptized. The words leave the impression that they had merely begun the Christian life. Such was the case. Only the first steps had been taken. A greater step was to follow, and that step was the reception of the Holy Spirit.

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The importance of the gift of the Holy Spirit is herewith suggested. The account says they received the Holy Spirit, which means that the Spirit was received in a special way. They had, it is true, been influenced by the Holy Spirit in conversion, and in that sense had received Him. It was by the influence of the Holy Spirit that they had been convicted, made to believe, and commit their lives to Jesus Christ. But the reception of the Spirit spoken of here is the special reception which we may call the baptism for service. It was very customary in the early Church for the new convert to receive some gift of the Spirit fitting him for service. Such gifts as those of tongues, prophecies, or teaching were received. The thought impressed by these facts is that disciples of Jesus are born into the Kingdom to serve, and need the gift of the Holy Spirit to that end. The modern Church too frequently fails at this point. If the Church to-day insisted on a complete surrender to God, and anointing of the Holy Spirit for service, she would be a greater power than she is. A Church without the Holy Spirit is like an engine without steam. The engine

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may be beautiful and perfect in its mechanism, but it will be useless because it lacks power. So with the Church ignoring the power of the Spirit.

The second feature in the work of these delegates to Samaria was the teaching of the right motive in service. The case of Simon the sorcerer furnished the opportunity for this lesson. Simon was one who had believed and been baptized, as we suppose, in good faith. However, some of his old nature still clung to him. He had formerly by the use of magic assumed to be some great one, and had commanded a large following. But when he saw the work of Peter and John, he recognized superiors and knew that these men exercised powers which he did not possess. When he saw that by the laying on of hands the apostles gave the Holy Ghost, he concluded that he might purchase the power at a price. Hence he proposed to Peter that for a sum of money there might be transferred to him the power of giving the Holy Ghost. Observe that his motive was not that he might glorify God by the use of the power, but rather that he might be able to grant the power of the Holy Spirit to whom he would.



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In other words, there would be both money and honor for him in the possession of the power. By giving to others the power of the Spirit he could receive large sums of money, as he did formerly with his sorcery. Also he would receive a large following and be looked upon with great favor. Thus Simon reasoned.

It was because of the wickedness of Simon's motive that Peter replied as he did, "Thy silver perish with thee because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money." Not only was the motive of Simon wrong, but he had an erroneous notion of the method of obtaining the gift of the Spirit. He thought to buy it with a price. He did not know that the currency that passes with God is not gold or silver, but faith. God's standard is not the gold standard or the silver standard, but the faith standard. Simon's judgment was not right. But worst of all, his heart was not right. His motive was wrong.

Herein lies a very important lesson. It is extremely easy to become possessed of a wrong motive in working for God. It is easy to be enthusiastic when we think our

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enthusiasm will bring us some profit in the way of honor or money. We become willing to give a large sum of money to the Church if we think everybody will know about it and compliment us for it. We are willing to toil earnestly if we think the people will consider us some great one because of the burden we bear. But in such cases the motive would certainly be wrong. It is self and not God who is served when such motives control. We need to be careful of our motives. If we find them wrong, there is need to apply an immediate remedy. That remedy is suggested in the context, in the requirements Peter made of Simon. There were two requirements, repentance and prayer.

The first requirement Peter made of Simon was, "Repent of this thy wickedness." The discovery of sin must always be followed by repentance if pardon is to be received and if the life is to be made right. If the human soul could see the sorrow caused the Divine Heart because of its sin, a corresponding sorrow would be aroused within, which would be relieved only by a complete turning from all wrong.

But in addition Peter said, "Pray God if

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perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." Prayer for forgiveness must follow repentance. Prayer must precede pardon and restoration to divine favor. The prayer for pardon and mercy is the pathway to peace. The cry of the publican, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," is the forerunner of the justified and happy life. A missionary tells of a Hottentot in South Africa who was living with the family of a Dutchman whose custom it was to have family prayers. The Hottentot was stricken with a sense of sin, and while in that condition one morning his master read the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. "Two men went up into the temple to pray." The Hottentot whispered, "Now I 'll learn how to pray." The Dutchman read, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men." "No, I am not, but worse," said the Hottentot. The Dutchman continued, "I fast twice a week and give tithes of all I possess." The Hottentot said, "I do n't do that; how can I pray?" But the Dutchman read on about the publican, who did not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven. "That 's me," whispered the poor Hottentot. "Stood afar off," read the other. "That 's

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where I am," said the Hottentot. "But smote upon his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.'" The African jumped up and cried: "That's me. That's my prayer." And smiting his troubled breast, he groaned, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." And it is said that, like the publican, the poor African went to his house a justified and happy man. For all conscious wrong the true remedy is that given by Peter—Peter, who had passed the way of tears and penitence: "Repent—Pray God."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### PETER AT LYDDA AND JOPPA.

BETWEEN the event discussed in the last chapter and the one to be presented in this chapter a new character appears in the history of the Church. This character appears as a star which is to shine brighter and brighter in the history of the early Church until all the others are eclipsed by it. It is Saul of Tarsus, soon to be known as Paul the Apostle. Up to this time Peter has been the central figure in the history of the Christian Church, but this new star has arisen to outshine him. The narrative of the conversion of Saul brings this new character into prominence. Saul increases in prominence, and as he does so Peter begins to decrease. He finally drops from sight so far as the account in the Book of Acts is concerned. But before he finally disappears from view there are two or three interesting glimpses of him given by Luke. To one of these our attention is now directed, namely, to the miracles at Lydda and Joppa.

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This is not the first time that Peter has been presented as a miracle worker. His first miracle was the healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful. Then occurred the healing of the afflicted people by his shadow passing over them. In Lydda and Joppa we see Peter again in the rôle of a miracle worker. In this latter case the miraculous power is carried to the highest possible degree, that of raising the dead.

The event at Lydda is narrated in four short verses in the ninth chapter of Acts, beginning with the thirty-second verse. The expression, "As Peter passed through all quarters," seems to imply that he had been continuing his missionary labors and was probably acting as a general overseer of the Christian communities. This fact is another mark of the prominence which Peter held even up to this time, and shows that until the appearance of Paul, no one had exercised more influence than he in the early Church.

In the course of these missionary journeys Peter came down to Lydda. Lydda was at that time a city of considerable importance, lying about twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem. The Word of God had

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already been preached there, for "saints" or Christians were dwelling there when Peter arrived. Among these believers was one named Æneas, who was an invalid afflicted with the palsy. The sufferer had been unable to walk for a period of eight years. Him Peter healed of his affliction. The account of the healing is given in a few words, without any attempt to describe details. There is nothing more remarkable in this miracle than many others recorded before, and others perhaps never recorded, so the question arises as to why this miracle is mentioned at all. It could not have been merely to reveal the power of Christ to heal, for that power had been revealed over and over. This case is mentioned perhaps to reveal the spirit the followers of Christ should have with reference to those who suffer. It will be noticed that this healing is voluntary on Peter's part. In other cases we usually find the afflicted one crying for help. The lame man at the Gate Beautiful stopped Peter and John and asked an alms of them. The afflicted one usually made the advance. But in the case now before us Peter makes the advance and says, "Æneas, Jesus Christ

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maketh thee whole: rise and make thy bed." It is an act revealing the true Christ-spirit. It is a spirit not willing that any one should suffer needlessly. Peter's act was equivalent to saying, "Æneas, Jesus Christ does n't want a mortal to suffer as you do, but offers healing." Such is the real attitude of Christ toward His people. He is in sympathetic relation with each of His followers, rejoicing in their joys and sorrowing with them in their griefs. This is the sympathy of feeling that should exist among His followers. This spirit of offering relief is the spirit His followers ought to exhibit.

This act of Peter was not only voluntary, but unselfish as well. Peter did not say, "I make you whole." He said, "Jesus Christ maketh you whole." He did not seek any glory for himself, but gave it all to the Lord. This is a valuable lesson for all Christians to learn. The most effective way of doing Christian work is to allow self to sink completely out of sight while the Master and the interests of His Kingdom are pushed to the front. The more self is out of sight, the more Christ will be in sight. The more self is forgotten, the more one thinks to do for the



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Master. Mark Guy Pearse says that he once saw an old man fishing for trout and pulling out the beautiful fish with surprising regularity. He approached the old gentleman and said: "You manage it very cleverly, my friend. I have passed several down the stream who do n't seem to be catching anything." The old man stuck his rod into the ground and replied: "Well, you see, sir, there are three rules for catching trout, and 't is no good trying if you do n't mind them. The first is, keep yourself out of sight. The second is, keep yourself further out of sight. The third is, keep yourself still further out of sight. Then you 'll catch them." Mr. Pearse says that as he walked away from the old man he said to himself, "Good rules for catching men, too." And it is true. The best rule for successful Christian work is to keep self out of sight and keep Christ to the front. If the Christ is to increase, the disciple must decrease.

The effect of this miracle by Peter was very pronounced. "All that dwelt in Lydda and Saron . . . returned to the Lord." Saron, spoken of elsewhere as Sharon, was a fertile plain extending for a distance of

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thirty miles along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It was the country producing the flowers spoken of in the Bible as the roses of Sharon. The result of Peter's miracle was that not only the people of Lydda, but the people of the plain of Sharon believed in Jesus Christ. They believed because of what they had seen and heard. It is ever true that the more the spirit of Christ is seen, the more the people will desire Him. He who would magnify Jesus should strive to reflect His spirit through the daily life.

The second miracle mentioned in this connection occurred at Joppa. Joppa was a sea-port town on the Mediterranean, about ten miles northwest of Lydda. In that town lived a good woman who was much loved because of deeds of charity. The woman, Tabitha by name, though better known as Dorcas, was a believer in Christ. Dorcas was taken seriously sick while Peter was yet in Lydda, and to the sorrow of her many friends the sickness resulted in death. The sorrowing friends, hearing that Peter was in Lydda, sent to him urging him to come immediately to Joppa. With much more detail than was given in the case of the miracle at Lydda, the

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account tells us how Peter hurried to Joppa, came into the presence of the dead woman, and, having put the weeping friends out of the room, by prayer and faith restored the dead to life.

As has been pointed out, this was the climax of the miracles of Peter. The raising of the dead to life is the climax of all miracles. It was the climax of the miracles of Jesus Christ. When we see Peter exercising this marvelous power and by its use placing himself by the side of his Master, we see the supreme testimony to the completeness of his transformation. On the night of denial Peter had not enough power to refrain from lies and blasphemy. Now he has enough power to raise the dead to life. Pentecost has come between.

Without attempting to notice the details of this miracle, it will yet be profitable to observe some of its practical suggestions. Three of these are given here as worthy of consideration:

1. *The usefulness of a good man to his fellow-men.* They sent for Peter. He was ten miles away. There were other Christian men in Joppa, but they wanted Peter. They

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knew that he was a man of God who could help them in their distress. It is a splendid thing to be so good and so trusted that others feel that you can help them in time of need. It is a compliment of the highest type to be sent for to bring consolation to those who suffer. It is a compliment, however, which every Christian ought to merit.

It is well that there are Christian friends who can help in time of need, but it is better still that there is a Divine Friend who may be called upon by every distressed soul, even Christ the Son of God. His presence is more valuable than that of even the good man of God. He is the best Friend in joy or sorrow. When Robert G. Ingersoll died, his wife was prostrated with grief and refused to be consoled. She could not bear the thought of giving up the body for cremation, but wanted to keep the lifeless clay as long as possible. Her mourning was hopeless. The separation was for her an eternal one, and hence no consolation could be offered. But if the mourning woman could have taken the Son of God by faith for her Friend, she would have received consolation for her troubled heart and would have found the grace of the Lord suf-

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ficient. The best Friend to send for in time of trouble is Jesus the Comforter.

2. *The influence of a good life lives after the life has ended.* Though dead, Dorcas still lived in the lives of those whom she had befriended. One of the most touching scenes depicted in the Word is that of those women standing over the corpse with tears in their eyes and with anguish written in their faces, holding in their hands the garments those dead hands had made. By their actions the women were saying that though the body must disappear, they would yet keep and value the mementos the body had touched. It is strange how some object otherwise all but worthless will suddenly become very valuable when one who used it or touched it has gone away never to return. A pair of baby shoes, a lock of hair, an old book, or a withered flower will often tell the story of a life which though now gone is still making its impression on other lives. Dorcas was a good woman and had left a good impression on all who knew her. Those whom she had befriended were now attempting to show their love for their benefactor by fondly displaying the garments she had made for them.

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It pays to live such a life that others by it are influenced for good. Such a life is a blessing to itself and to others while it lives, and after it is gone it will still continue to be of blessed memory to many. After the body of Daniel Webster had been laid to rest an admiring friend was accustomed to visit his grave, and upon one occasion, while wringing his hands in sorrow, the friend was heard to exclaim, "O Daniel Webster, the world is lonesome without you." The aim of every true life should be to live so helpfully that after it is gone there will be a sense of infinite loss felt in the community from which it departs.

3. *The secret of usefulness is in communion with God.* Peter prayed. He prayed alone. There are times when one needs to be alone with God. Peter felt such a need at this time. He was facing the most difficult task he ever faced, that of raising the dead to life. He knew his source of strength was in God. So he prayed. It would be well for every disciple to learn the lesson of dependence as well as Peter had learned it. He learned his lesson by bitter experience. Not

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all will have the bitter experience, but the lesson needs to be learned. When a great trial comes, or a crisis is faced, the source of strength is the Lord. The life that then looks to God through prayer and dwells with Him by private communion will be the victorious life.

Observe, however, that Peter did more than pray. He rose from his knees to act. He put to service the power he had taken from the altar of prayer. He said to the dead woman, "Tabitha, arise." The woman opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up, and he presented her alive to her friends. It was a marvelous deed; the climax of all Peter's acts. But again we need to remark that it was not Peter who did the miracle, but the Lord working through Peter. The preparation of Peter as the agency for the miracle was completed on his knees in the act of prayer. He who would be powerful in life must be fervent in prayer.

The closing verse of this narrative reveals something of the sanctifying influence of the spirit of Christ upon a life. The statement is made that Peter tarried many days

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with one Simon a tanner. There is a world of meaning in that verse. It shows that a mighty step in breaking down Jewish prejudice had been taken in the life of Peter. A tanner was looked upon as one unclean by the Jews because of his business. He was therefore shunned by the average Jew. Yet here was Peter stopping with a tanner. He could not have done that a few months before. If such a thing had been suggested, he would have taken it as an insult. But now he is different. The spirit of Christ has been working in his nature and he is greatly changed. Only once after this do we see even a glimpse of the former spirit displayed, and that is when Paul censured Peter for revealing a little Jewish prejudice at Antioch. But old things are now passing away. The spirit of love and brotherhood is now filling him.

Such is always the effect of the spirit of Christ on the life. It creates an interest in and a love for all. He who shuns another because he is poor or ignorant, or because he happens to be unfortunate, has not the spirit of Christ. The Christ-spirit loves and helps all. Before one becomes useful in the



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largest degree he must possess that spirit. A splendid hint as to the manner of obtaining it is seen in this case of Peter. Such prayer and work as characterized his life at this time will result in the possession of the true Christ-spirit.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### PETER AND CORNELIUS.

THE decline of Jewish prejudice in the life of Peter was evidenced, as was stated in the last chapter, by the fact of his lodging with Simon the tanner. Another evidence of that decline was seen in the case of Peter's dealing with Cornelius. The experience with Simon, however, was a preparation for the experience with Cornelius, hence should be noticed carefully. The greatness of Peter's condescension in stopping at the house of Simon the tanner is seen in observing the condition of the latter as viewed from the Jewish standpoint. Simon was of a class much despised by the Jews. His residence was by the seaside, because a tanner was obliged by law to have his place of business at least fifty cubits from the limits of a town. Simon evidently had his business in connection with his residence by the seaside. The tanner was looked upon with such contempt that special regulations were passed for his

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control. If a tanner married without informing his intended wife of the nature of his business, that fact alone was sufficient ground for a divorce. The Jews had a law requiring the childless widow to marry a brother of her deceased husband. But if that brother happened to be a tanner, the law was set aside by that fact. There was a gulf fixed between the tanner and good Jewish society. Yet here we find Peter overleaping all these prejudices and lodging with Simon the tanner. Like one presenting an interesting drama, the author of Acts ushers Peter into the home of Simon and then drops the curtain upon the scene. But the events behind the scene helped prepare the way for another soon to follow.

When the curtain rises again the scene has shifted to the city of Cæsarea. This was a city of considerable importance, situated on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, about thirty miles north of Joppa and seventy miles northwest of Jerusalem. Josephus called it a city of palaces. Its magnificence was due to Herod the Great, who built and named it after Cæsar Augustus. According to Josephus, Herod "built it all of white stone, adorned it with most splendid palaces and

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. . . with a harbor that was at all times free from the waves of the sea." The inhabitants of the city were largely Gentiles, though there were some Jews there. The Greek language was the one in common use. This city under the Romans became the home of the procurators and the headquarters of the Roman troops stationed in Judea. In this city lived Cornelius, the Roman centurion, who is the chief figure in the incident now before us.

In Peter's experience with Cornelius we have presented an instance of the mysterious way in which the providence of God sometimes moves to perform its wonders. In the providence of God the time had now arrived when the door of salvation was to be thrown open to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Peter and Cornelius were agencies through which Providence worked, but the method employed was that of the mysterious visions sent to both men. Before going further into the incident, it will be well to notice the character of Cornelius.

It is one of the incongruities of human life that characters are sometimes found completely out of harmony with their en-

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vironments. History reveals men in advance of their age. Men are often found who in disposition and in culture are far beyond their surroundings. Cornelius was a man of this kind. He was a Roman, but far ahead of the average Roman in morality and religion. He was ahead of the average Jew also in these same respects. He is described in the Word as being "a devout man and one who feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army, occupying the position of a centurion. A centurion was a commander of one hundred men, the company being called a century. Two centuries were united to form a band. Cornelius was one of the centurions of the band called the Italian band, a body of two hundred men. Three bands were united in the Roman army to form a cohort, this being a body of six hundred men. Ten cohorts formed the famous Roman legion, which marched six thousand strong.

While occupying the position of a stern warrior, Cornelius was yet a devout man. The word "devout" as used in this connection implies, as is indicated by the original

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Greek word, a genuine piety. In spite of a position that was calculated to produce anything but piety, Cornelius was deeply religious. This fact is significant. It suggests the possibility of religious character irrespective of environment. Cornelius was living in a very trying place for a godly man. He was a victim of those environments so common to the life of a soldier. In this land in time of war many a loving mother has sent her stainless boy to the army and into the field, only to have him returned to her later all corrupted by the practices of army life. Sin surrounds the camp of the soldier usually. Cornelius lived in the midst of such surroundings as corrupt life. He was doubtless subject, too, to some persecutions because of his faith. It must be remembered that Cornelius was a Roman. He would naturally be expected to be a supporter of the Roman religion, and offer his prayers to Jupiter or some unknown heathen god. But he had cut loose from the Roman religion and was offering his prayers to the God of the Jews. He feared God with all his house and prayed to God alway, the account says. This might easily be considered an act of disloy-

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alty from the standpoint of the Romans, and because of it Cornelius might have suffered some persecution from Roman hands. Nevertheless, we find him true to God and devout in his life. He led a religious life in irreligious surroundings.

A Christian life can be lived anywhere. The assertion is sometimes made that it is impossible to live a Christian life in a certain business or in a certain place. Such a statement is an excuse offered to justify a shameful absence of moral courage. There are certain trying places in which, because of moral weakness, men fail to maintain a Christian life. But their failure does not justify the claim that the Christian life can not be lived there. The Christian life can be lived in any sort of surroundings. That fact has been proven over and over. But if such a life is lived, there are some requirements that must be met. Two of these are worthy of emphasis:

First, there must be the spirit and courage of perseverance. That is the spirit that wins elsewhere. Grit in the Christian life is as essential as in any other phase of life. No man can expect to become great in learning

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without making an heroic effort. Lincoln reading by the light of pine knots, and Garfield sweeping rooms to pay school expenses, are examples of the price that must be paid for learning. In business the law is the same. The foundation of the Vanderbilt wealth was simply the grit and perseverance of one Cornelius, who began life as a poor boy. And the story of many of the rich is that they have come up through tribulation. The law of culture is likewise that of toil and courage. The musicians, artists, and orators who have risen to the top have been those who have had the grit to surmount great difficulties. And if this is the law elsewhere, we need not be surprised to find it is the law of the religious life. A person who has not the pluck to amount to anything elsewhere has a poor show in the religious life. And the reverse is just as true. A person who can not amount to anything in religion has a poor show elsewhere.

Second, there must be dependence on divine leadership. Human tenacity is good, but it is not enough. Man's determination may produce a morality, but it can not produce spiritual growth. That must come from di-



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vine aid. The one who would attain a spiritual growth which will enable him to live a Christian life anywhere must feed himself on the truth of God's Word, commune with the Spirit of God in prayer, and avail himself of every possible means of grace. Human grit must be supplemented by the indwelling of the Divine Spirit.

Where these two elements are found it is possible to live the Christian life in spite of adverse surroundings. Such living has often been witnessed. Cornelius in the rough army life was an example. The martyrs, in spite of threatened death, so lived. Many faithful witnesses for the Lord in business, in the professions, in shops, on the railroads, and in other places where sin abounds, are living the faithful life even to-day. He who can not live such a life is hardly worthy of the name of Christian. These faithful ones are they who win and wear the crown at last. John in his vision learned that the ones clothed in white around the throne of God were those who had come up through tribulation. In the trying places of earth they had faithfully lived their lives and had at last come to their reward of crown and robes.

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It is significant that a character like Cornelius should receive a revelation from God. The Heavenly Father is ever ready to speak to those who are ready to hear. He is ready to use those who are ready to be used. Cornelius was ready for the vision when it came. When the angel of the Lord appeared to the pious centurion, he evidenced his readiness for the revelation by saying, "What is it, Lord?" The reply of the angel emphasizes the importance of prayer and righteousness: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." God had better things in store for a man who could pray and live like Cornelius. The purpose of God for Cornelius was revealed in the instruction to send to Joppa and inquire for one Simon Peter, who lodged with Simon the tanner. When Simon Peter was found he would give instruction as to what should be done further. The instructions of the angel were carried out, Cornelius sending three messengers to Joppa to inquire for and learn of Peter.

As interesting as any fiction is the story of the method by which God prepared Peter for the reception of these messengers, and for the work He desired Peter to do. A sec-

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ond vision sent to Peter at Joppa supplemented the one sent to Cornelius at Cæsarea. It was a vision of a vessel like a great sheet let down from heaven and containing all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air. Of these Peter was commanded to kill and eat. What that command meant to Peter can be understood only by recalling the common Jewish training and prejudice. The Mosaic law described numerous beasts and creeping things as unclean, and he who touched them was also considered unclean. It will be remembered that Daniel and his companions chose to live on pulse rather than defile themselves with the king's meat, which they considered unclean. Instances are on record wherein Jews have suffered death rather than permit themselves to become unclean by eating the flesh of swine. In the light of such a belief among the Jews, we need not be surprised that Peter refused the request to eat of those animals, declaring that he had never eaten anything common or unclean. This refusal offered the opportunity for the Lord to teach a desired lesson, so Peter heard the strange words, "What God hath cleansed that call not thou

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common." Three times was the lesson taught, and while Peter stood wondering what it might all mean, the solution came in the appearance of the three messengers from Cornelius asking Peter to come with them to Cæsarea and teach the Roman centurion the things he needed to know concerning Christ. Then Peter understood the vision. The Romans and other Gentiles were considered unclean by the Jews. But this Roman at Cæsarea God had cleansed and would send Peter as a messenger to teach him the gospel of Jesus Christ. This fact taught the larger fact that the Gentiles were to be the objects of God's favor as well as the Jews. Them God had cleansed. What He had cleansed Peter had no right to call unclean. Peter learned the lesson. So we see this strict Jew again breaking through the wall of Jewish prejudice and going down to Cæsarea, and there preaching the gospel to a despised Roman with such power that not only he, but all who heard him were filled with the Holy Spirit and baptized into the new faith.

Here was the great object at which God had been aiming all through that process of

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visions and journeyings. It was the offering of the gospel to the Gentiles. By that process a great and effectual door was opened through which all nations might pass into the Kingdom of Christ. The two hinges of that door were a pious Gentile and a pious Jew, both of whom were much given to prayer.

Some observations helpful to the Christian life of to-day may be drawn from this ancient incident. It suggests that our decided advances in the religious life are made largely through prayer. Peter and Cornelius were both at prayer when their revelations came from the Lord. It is the spirit of prayer that gives opportunity for God to send to our lives the visions and experiences He would have us receive. Failure to possess the spirit of prayer has robbed many a soul of the visions God has wanted to send. However magnificent may be the visions awaiting us in the providence of God, they will never be received unless we attain through communion with God that susceptibility of soul making possible the impressing of the heaven-sent picture.

Again, the mysterious circumstances of

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life are often God's preparation for higher experiences and more useful service. The visions were strange to both Peter and Cornelius. The mysteries were not understood at first, but the men followed the divine leading and were brought to a larger experience. In the life of mankind it is often true that the season of sorrow, of misfortune, perhaps of death has come, and with it a sense of mystery. Why such experiences should come is more than the unfortunate victim can understand. Yet often it is discovered that God's shaping hand is moving through the trial, and the sufferer finds himself possessed of a quality of life or a power for usefulness which he had never thought to possess. The mysterious and dreaded circumstances have afforded God the opportunity for developing a life.

The truth is likewise suggested here that in leading His people onward God opens one door at a time. Peter's experience here is interesting. In leading him away from narrow Judaism to a broader Christianity, God first opened the door to Samaria and we find Peter working there among those who were half Gentile and thoroughly disliked. Next

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we see the door opened to the home of a despised tanner, and at Simon's table in Joppa Peter came in personal touch with one considered unclean. And finally, in the case of Cornelius we see him led through the larger door of gospel privilege for the entire Gentile world.

This is God's way with His children. Step by step He leads us on. Door after door He opens for us. And the amount of our advancement is measured by our willingness to enter these doors. This being true, the question of the Christian should be that of the pious Roman soldier, "What is it, Lord? What door shall I enter next?" We need not ask to see the distant way, but in the spirit of the old song ever say, "One step enough for me." He who, like Cornelius, attains to the spirit of constant prayer and remains willing to be led one step at a time, is one whose future is safe for time and eternity. God will lead him through many opening doors to larger fields and broader visions.

## CHAPTER XX.

### PETER HEROD'S VICTIM.

THE action of Peter in preaching to the Gentiles at Cæsarea and elsewhere, and baptizing them in the name of Jesus, was decidedly heretical in the eyes of the more orthodox Jews at Jerusalem. When they heard of Peter's conduct they determined to give the offender a severe chastisement for his supposed breach of faith. Their opportunity came when Peter returned to Jerusalem. One who has noticed the excitable nature of the Jew as manifested both in hot words and nervous actions can imagine the scene upon Peter's arrival at Jerusalem. The Jews gathered around him with bitter reproaches. They freely condemned him for his actions. They claimed that he had acted in an unwarranted way and had turned traitor to his own people in bearing their gospel to the despised Gentiles. With that scathing sarcasm that only an excited Jew could display, they said, "Thou wentest in



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to men uncircumcised and did eat with them." The accusers had in mind evidently not only Peter's experience with Cornelius at Cæsarea, but also his conduct toward Simon the tanner at Joppa.

The reply which Peter made to his accusers should be carefully noted. He did not attempt to argue the case with them. He simply began a narration of the events that had happened in his recent experience. He told of his strange vision and its meaning; of the call of the messengers to come to Cæsarea; of the way the Holy Ghost fell on the Gentiles while he was speaking to them. In a word, he simply told what God had done through him, and what he had done by the aid of the Holy Spirit. The divine leading in the case was so evident that even those prejudiced Jews had to admit it. As the evidence grew conclusive they began to show a more beautiful spirit. They not only held their peace, but began to glorify God for what He had done and said, "Then unto the Gentiles also has God granted repentance unto life." Prejudice had suddenly vanished. There was a reason for it. The facts narrated were convincing. The best possible

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way to overcome the prejudice or misconceptions which others may hold concerning our lives is the evidence that those lives are God-led. The conviction that God's will is controlling a life will overthrow prejudice concerning it. The influence of such a life will of its own force disarm others of their opposition. The other truth is also apparent, that in spite of our criticism of other lives they may be God-led, and therefore we need to be careful lest we by our opposition fight against God.

But we must turn now from this scene of the carrying of the gospel to the Gentiles to a scene vastly different. We turn to the effort of certain ungodly ones to stay the sweeping tide of Christianity. Herod Agrippa I was now ruler over Palestine and had identified himself with the sect of the Pharisees in order to gain favor. It was probably for the same reason that he became a persecutor of the Christians. One of the early victims of his heartless persecution was James, the brother of John. Him Herod put to death. James seems thus to have been the first apostle to suffer death for the Lord's sake. It will be recalled that

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this same James was one of the favorite disciples of the Lord. He was one of the three who belonged to the inner circle of Christ's friends. Peter, James, and John were the three forming that circle. But now by the work of Herod the circle was broken. Peter and John were permitted to tarry a while, but James was taken. His death must have caused much sadness to Peter and John, but they never faltered in their work for the Lord. When Herod saw that the death of James greatly pleased the Jews, he determined to continue the persecution. He next proceeded to lay hands on Peter also. He probably intended that Peter should meet the same fate that had befallen James. The first step toward that ultimate fate was the imprisonment of Peter. His place of confinement was probably the tower of Antonia.

The great care taken to keep Peter secure after his arrest was striking. He was guarded by four quaternions of soldiers. A quaternion was a company of four. Peter was therefore guarded by four squads of soldiers, each squad consisting of four men, thus making sixteen in all. Moreover, the prisoner was placed in a cell and chains were

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fastened upon him. According to Roman custom, these chains were attached also to the guarding soldiers, so there could be no possibility of escape. Yet in spite of all these precautions this unusual prisoner was strangely delivered from his enemies. The cause and method of that deliverance are given in the narrative now before us.

The cause of the deliverance was, according to the narrative, the prayers of the Christian Church. The account says that prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for Peter. These early disciples were genuine Christians and manifested an interest in others. That interest is a mark of the Christian spirit. When their brother in the Lord was in distress, their hearts went out in sympathy toward him. It is too often the case that Christian people forget the brother in distress. An analysis of ordinary Christian prayers will reveal the fact that petitions are made largely for self and only in a small degree for others. Often it is true that the need of others does not enter into the prayer at all. A certain Christian gentleman was recently passing through a dark and trying experience, and while he was in the midst of

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the struggle a Christian lady was heard to remark to a friend, "I never prayed for any one in my life as I have prayed for that man." That was a manifestation of a beautiful Christian spirit. But it was a spirit every Christian should possess. If Christians gave the needs of others a larger place in their prayers, their own lives would be richer and the world would be better. Those early disciples prayed for Peter, and that fact evidently figured as a cause in his deliverance.

The method of deliverance used in this case was one of divine appointment. An angel of the Lord was sent to the prison cell. The prisoner was asleep. A touch of the angel's hand awoke him. The picture of an angel awakening as presented here is a suggestive one. It is a type of that other awakening in which a spirit messenger arouses man from the sleep of the temporal life into the light of another and eternal day.

Peter heard the angel's injunction, "Arise." He obeyed. As he arose the chains fell from his wrists. "Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals." That instruction was a promise of liberty. A journey was in

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prospect. The prison walls were to be left behind. "Cast thy garment about thee," continued the deliverer. The reference here is to the cloak or outer garment which Peter had cast off upon entering the cell. He was now to walk out into the cool night air, and the garment was needed. The angel led the way from the prison and Peter followed. He followed like a man in a dream. The experience was exceedingly strange, and Peter, being just aroused from his sleep, did not comprehend its meaning, but thought he saw a vision. The watching soldiers at the door were safely passed. The outer wall was reached and the huge iron gate opened seemingly of its own accord, and the prisoner and his guide passed out into the street and to liberty. The strong walls of Antonia's tower, the chains and guarding soldiers were not sufficient to hold the man whom God would free.

In the street the angel left Peter, and he, being thoroughly aroused and refreshed by the night air, realized his deliverance. But where should the delivered man go? He was in a dangerous situation, for there were enemies all around him in the city. There was,

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however, one home in that city in which Peter felt he would be safe, and in which he would likely meet with loving friends. It was the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. It was the home in which it is supposed Peter and John prepared the Last Supper for the Lord, and therefore the home in which Peter had declared that he would go with his Master even unto death. And although he had once proven untrue, he had now almost paid the vow.

Peter went directly to this home. While he expected to find there some very close friends, he probably expected to find also some of the brethren, for he knew that in those dangerous times of persecution the Christians often held meetings of prayer in the night. So with some expectation Peter came to the gate leading to the house. It will be recalled that during the trial of Jesus the gate to the home of Caiaphas was kept by a damsel. Here again we find a similar case. The outer gate to which Peter came was kept by a little maid named Rhoda or Rose. Peter applied for admission, and the girl upon hearing his voice recognized it. Without waiting to open the gate to allow

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the escaped prisoner to come in, she ran in her excitement to tell the news to the people assembled in the house. Some uncharitable critics have stated that it is in the nature of woman to covet the opportunity of being the first to disclose a secret. Whether the general accusation be true, it seems to have applied in the case of Rhoda. Her surprise, mingled with her desire to tell a great secret which would be a refreshing bit of good news, caused her to hurry to the people who were at that moment in the house praying for the deliverance of Peter. In a hurried and excited way Rhoda told her secret. She had wanted to surprise the people, but the surprise was not so great as she had anticipated, for the people, instead of being surprised at the news, simply refused to believe it. They even surprised the girl herself by declaring that she was mad. But as that accusation seemed a little severe, they changed it and said that Rhoda had seen a vision, or perhaps the angel of Peter had appeared. But they were sure she had not seen or heard Peter himself. But the girl's persistency had some effect, and while they were discussing the matter they began to move out toward



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the gate. Listening, they themselves heard a knocking, and upon opening the gate found themselves standing face to face with the delivered apostle. Peter, after quieting their exclamations of surprise, explained the process of his escape to them. Peter also revealed immediately a spirit that was certainly commendable. He so far forgot himself and his danger that he could apply himself to the needs of others. He remembered that there were in Jerusalem many brethren who would be glad not only for his deliverance, but also for the evidence of the Lord's presence and power in that deliverance. Hence he gave instructions for the news to be carried at once to the brethren. One of these brethren is mentioned specifically. It is James. The James mentioned is not the son of Zebedee, but as many scholars suppose, is James the brother of the Lord. As to Peter himself, we are told only that "he departed and went into another place." This statement is with one exception the last one made concerning Peter in the Book of Acts. The "other place" spoken of was doubtless some place of safety and retirement outside the city, the exact spot being unknown. With

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Peter in that place of safety, we will let the curtain drop on his life for the period now being considered.

This incident is suggestive of several valuable truths, which we will notice as we close the study:

1. God is mighty to deliver in spite of human machinations. All the precautions of Herod were as nothing in the face of God's purpose to deliver Peter. Man's best laid plans are insufficient to overturn the purposes of God. God's pre-eminence is the guarantee of the soul's security. To the soul that trusts in Him there is given a way of escape from every temptation that allures and every chain that fetters.

2. Prayer is mightier than prison bars. Prayer offered by Peter's friends found its way to the throne of God, and God in response opened the door of Peter's prison cell. This is the method of prayer. Effective prayer avails with God, and He in turn reaches through His power the object of the prayer. Prayer thus becomes the instrument by which the greatest victories of God's people are gained.

3. Consciousness of being right with God

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gives a peace that nothing can disturb. That is a striking picture which represents Peter as sleeping calmly in the prison cell. The surroundings were undesirable. Death was perhaps waiting on the morrow. But Peter was sleeping peacefully. The secret of his peace was his rightness with God. In life or death he was the Lord's. The consciousness of being right with God gives a peace which abides amidst the accusations of enemies and the hardships of the world. Injustices may be meted out and disappointments may come, but a calmness reigns in the soul.

4. Christians are often too unready to accept God's answers to their prayers. Peter appeared before his friends at the very time they were praying for his deliverance. Yet they were unready to believe that he had been delivered. They could not believe that the very thing for which they had been earnestly praying had happened. In other words, they could not believe their prayers had been answered. This is a failing of Christian people all too common. We pray and are surprised when God answers our prayers. God answers prayer. The answer

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is not always in the manner anticipated. It may be in a manner altogether different. But He answers. It is desirable for the Christian to possess such a faith in God that if the prayers are answered exactly as expected the answer is not dishonored by unbelief; and if the prayer be answered in a manner unexpected, the answer is still accepted in a spirit of believing humility. The followers of Him who promised to answer prayer should not be guilty of the incongruity of offering prayer but refusing to accept its answer.

PART THREE.

THE DAYS OF DECLINE.

(From the Council at Jerusalem, 51 A. D., to the  
Death of Peter.)



## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM.

IN a former chapter the statement was made that upon the appearance of Paul in early Church history, Peter began to decline in prominence and finally disappeared, so far as the history of him in the Book of Acts is concerned. In the incident we are now to consider, the conference at Jerusalem. we get the last glimpse of Peter furnished in the Book of Acts. This conference was the first and one of the most important councils in Church history. In it Peter acts as one of the leading figures, sharing prominence with Paul, Barnabas, and James.

The conference at Jerusalem occurred about the year 51 A. D., according to well-accepted chronology. The necessity for the conference was found in a dispute amounting almost to a dissension, which arose in the early Church concerning the question of circumcision. The rapid growth of Christianity

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had brought a mixed multitude into the fellowship of the Church. Converts were made not only from among the Jews, but many were added from Gentile sources through the work of Peter and Paul. It was natural that the Jewish converts should cling to their Jewish traditions and be influenced by their Jewish prejudices. Inasmuch as it had been customary under the old traditions for proselytes to be initiated into Jewish fellowship by circumcision, it was natural for the Jews to believe that Gentiles coming into Christian fellowship should submit to the same ceremony, and especially since Christianity originated among the Jews and was an offshoot of Judaism. Two classes of believers, therefore, grew up in the Christian Church, and became more and more distinct. One class was composed of those so colored by former Judaistic ideas that they demanded that all Gentile converts be circumcised. The other was composed of a broader and spiritual class of people who saw more clearly the meaning of the gospel and who believed that the circumcision of the Gentiles was an unnecessary and burdensome requirement. The controversy was one which was evidently



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hotly waged. One might expect it to be a warmly debated question when one recalls on the one hand the wall which for ages had separated the Jew from the Gentile, and on the other hand the natural devotion of the Jew to his old customs and traditions. As a matter of fact, the disputed question brought the Church face to face with a crisis.

The importance of this debated question is realized when one stops to consider what the consequences might have been had the question been settled differently. A contrary decision would doubtless have placed upon Christianity a yoke the burden of which would have been too heavy to bear. Compulsory circumcision would have placed exceedingly narrow limits upon Christianity. More than that, the emphasizing of an external ceremony as an essential would have obscured the real spirit of Christianity. The letter which killeth would have been substituted for the spirit which maketh alive. The wise decision of that council conserved the free and broad spirit which, in spite of misunderstanding and much smothering beneath unwelcome rubbish, has been the glory of

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Christianity through the ages. It seems a little strange, in the face of that early decision, that the Church has ever attempted to bind her adherents with the letter of the law instead of liberating them with the spirit of the gospel. The attempts which the Church has made to erect a dogma as a test of acceptance with God, or to enjoin a certain ceremony as an essential to salvation, or exalt any rite above righteousness, has been an exhibition of the same spirit displayed by those Judaizers who demanded the circumcision of the Gentiles as a step in the process of their redemption. The dispatch and wisdom with which the first council of the Church disposed of that error and narrowness should stand as a constant rebuke to all who would seek to exalt the letter which killeth rather than the spirit which maketh alive.

The detailed account of the proceedings of the conference is given in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. We may call this chapter the Minutes of the First Christian Conference. The conference was held, as we have seen, in the year 51 A. D., before the first and second missionary journeys of St. Paul.

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The dispute over the question of circumcision grew heated in the city of Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas tarried after the first missionary journey. Some Judaizers from Jerusalem had come to Antioch teaching dogmatically that, in order for the Gentiles to be saved, they must submit to circumcision "after the manner of Moses." This teaching aroused the opposition of Paul and Barnabas, who had in their missionary labors seen the Lord graciously save many Gentiles without the accompanying act of circumcision. The difference between these two apostles and the Judaizers was that the former spoke from experience and the latter from theory. The former argued from a true conception of the spirit of Christianity, the latter from an utter misconception of its meaning. The Judaizers considered salvation as a series of judicial enactments, while Paul and Barnabas correctly conceived it as a personal relation between the individual and God. The difference was, therefore, a fundamental one, and it is not surprising that the contention waxed warm. It was a matter of importance not only to the disputing parties, but to the Church at large.

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Hence it was concluded that the matter should be settled by the authority of the Church. The proposition that the matter in dispute should be carried from Antioch to Jerusalem indicates that at this time the center of authority in the Church was Jerusalem, and that it was in the apostles and elders in that city. The conference was called, and Jerusalem made the place of meeting.

The conference was made up of many prominent people of the early Church. The apostles are spoken of in the records as a part of the assembly. This does not necessarily mean that all the apostles were present, but some of them. Peter and James are especially mentioned because they took prominent part in the proceedings. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul, speaking of this gathering, mentions John also.

The James here mentioned is not to be confused with James the brother of John. He had been put to death several years before by the command of Herod. The James mentioned in this case is the James known as "the Lord's brother," who was prominent in the affairs of the Church at Jerusalem, and

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who presided at this council. The question can not be discussed here as to whether this James is the same as James "the son of Alphæus."

Aside from the apostles, the elders are mentioned as being present. The "Church" is likewise mentioned, indicating that many disciples from the common ranks were present. It seems, therefore, that the meeting was a general one in its nature. To the meeting as thus constituted Paul and Barnabas came with the delegation from Antioch. Two names are specifically mentioned in the account of the meeting. They are Silas and Judas who, with Paul and Barnabas, were sent by the Church at Antioch to deliver the message to the conference.

The debate on the question to be considered was evidently opened by the Judaizing party, for the account says that certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed declared that it was needful for the Gentile converts to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. From the reading of the account as contained in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, it seems possible that this argument was begun before the meeting was formally

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assembled. The question was one of common conversation and of increasing interest. Hence the apostles and elders came together with the Church to consider the matter. When the meeting was called, the question was seriously taken up.

According to the account in Acts, there were four addresses of importance made upon the question. The first was by Peter, who was followed by Barnabas and Paul, and last of all by James, who evidently acted as chairman, rendering in his address the final decision of the conference. We are concerned principally with the address of Peter, inasmuch as we are considering his life and character. The addresses of the other speakers concern us only as they contributed to the ultimate settlement of the question at stake. Mention of that settlement will be made in the next chapter.

It is apparent that the address of Peter would be received with great consideration by the council inasmuch as he was one who had journeyed with the Lord from the beginning. He would know, therefore, the spirit of the Master. Furthermore, Peter had spent years in laboring among the Gen-

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titles, and his valuable experience gained therein would give his words something of the weight of authority. It may be assumed, then, that in this instance Peter was heard with intense interest. The address which he delivered is typical of the man. It has certain characteristics which mark it as similar to the sermons of Peter delivered in earlier days. For example, it displays tact in getting the confidence of those addressed, for it appealed to their knowledge of facts instead of offering arbitrary assertions. Likewise, the address has the old familiar keynote of salvation by Jesus Christ.

There are four propositions prominent in the address of Peter. We are not to assume that the address is recorded in full in the Acts, but the four propositions given doubtless contain the substance of it. The propositions follow:

1. God chose the Gentiles as subjects to hear the word of the gospel. Peter reminds his auditors that they know this fact, and that this choice was made a long time before. He further declares that it was by his mouth the Gentiles were to hear the gospel, which fact the auditors also knew. These facts

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were known so well that no one would dispute them. They furnished common standing ground. Nobody among the Christian hearers would dispute the facts stated. But Peter had not as yet touched the disputed point at all. All Christians would agree that God had included the Gentiles in the plan of salvation, but the question was, *how* were they to receive that salvation. What was to be the condition of acceptance? Must they follow the old custom among the Jews and be circumcised, or could they be accepted without it? Peter did not touch upon the main question in his first proposition, but by it having gained a common ground on which to stand with his opponents, he went on to the second proposition.

2. God made the condition of salvation to be faith in Christ. Here Peter approached the point in dispute. The condition of acceptance was not circumcision, but faith. They were purified by faith and not by circumcision. Peter strengthened his statement by showing that God had put no difference between the Jews and Gentiles, granting the Holy Spirit to both and purifying the hearts of both by faith. When he showed that God's



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seal had been set upon the method of receiving the Gentiles by faith alone in the act of granting to them the Holy Spirit, he placed the question beyond all dispute. He cited a matter of experience and of history that could not be rejected. If God had placed His sanction upon the free acceptance of the Gentiles, what right had man to demand another method of acceptance? This historic evidence of the granting of the Holy Spirit is the strong point in Peter's address. That argument was simply unanswerable. It was the strength of that historic fact that led him on to the next proposition.

3. Attempting to enjoin circumcision is equal to tempting God. The argument of Peter was that to enjoin circumcision would be to go beyond God's own requirement. If God granted the Holy Spirit in the absence of circumcision, for man to require circumcision would be to despise the method of God. Furthermore, Peter pointed out the fact that it would be placing upon the new converts a yoke too heavy to be borne. That Peter herein pointed out a real danger may be seen when one stops to consider the slow progress Christianity must of necessity have made

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among the nations of the world had circumcision been made a necessary yoke.

The last proposition of Peter was in the form of a summary.

4. Faith in Christ is the universal condition of salvation. This was the heart of Peter's gospel always. And it was the secret of his success in evangelism. It is the truth which through the ages has given wings to the gospel. Every great Christian reformer and evangelist from Peter to the present day has had this truth for his theme. On it as a platform the feet of the successful preacher and Christian worker must ever be placed.

The soundness of Peter's argument is evidenced in the fact that he was supported in his position by the speakers who followed—Barnabas, Paul, and James. Moreover, the position of Peter was accepted by the conference and formally sent by chosen members to the Church at Antioch as the final decision of the first Christian council.

It is a matter of interest to note that after all the changes and trying experiences through which Peter has passed, when we come to hear his voice for the last time in

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the history of the early Church, that voice rings true in sounding the note of universal redemption through Christ—"We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE INCIDENT AT ANTIOCH.

WITH the close of the conference at Jerusalem the Book of Acts drops the curtain on the life of Peter. Nor does the New Testament elsewhere throw much light on the closing days of his life. Some facts are learned by inference from the two Epistles which bear his name, and there is one distinct reference made to him in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Aside from these sources, there is little to be learned in the New Testament concerning the closing days of Peter's life. Much is mentioned by tradition, as will be shown in the closing chapter, but reliable history is lacking.

The reference to Peter made by Paul, as mentioned above, is recorded in the second chapter of Galatians, from the eleventh to the fourteenth verses. From this reference and from suggestions found in tradition and secular sources, a probable account of Peter's life at this period may be had. Peter evi-

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dently went to Antioch not a great while after the conference at Jerusalem, for the incident mentioned by Paul occurred in Antioch while Paul and Barnabas were yet co-laborers, which means before their separation at the beginning of their second missionary journey, about 52 A. D. During his residence at Antioch, Peter lived out the spirit of the declaration made by the Jerusalem conference. He communed freely with the Gentile converts. Jewish prejudices were forgotten and the broader Christian spirit prevailed with him. He ate with the Gentiles. The love-feast and the Supper of the Lord were enjoyed with them. There seemed to be neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ was All and in all.

But a change in conditions soon occurred. Certain Jewish converts from the Church in Jerusalem came to Antioch and found Peter eating with the Gentiles. These certain ones from Jerusalem were doubtless of the Judaizers who are spoken of in Acts 15:5, and who originated the controversy which was settled by the council at Jerusalem. They were converts from among the Pharisees and had as a governing rule of conduct a pro-

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hibition against eating meat with the Gentiles, whom they considered unclean. This eating referred to in the case of Peter was probably the partaking of the agape, or love-feast. The eating of this feast was held as a mark of brotherly love among early Christians. A refusal to eat it would be regarded as a denial of the spirit of brotherhood. Hence in the thought of Peter it was necessary that the custom of eating the agape should be maintained. He gave himself to the custom.

When the Judaizers from Jerusalem observed that Peter ate with the Gentiles, they began a process of bitter denunciation. One thing in the favor of these critics was the fact that they purported to come from James, and would claim, therefore, the sanction of James to their objections. Moreover, they were tactful enough not to attack the decision of the council. They made no effort to annul its decrees. They merely accused Peter of going beyond anything intended by the council when he condescended to eat with the Gentiles. The council had decreed that the Gentiles should be admitted into Christian fellowship without circumcision, but it had

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not decreed that their admission to such fellowship justified Jews in eating with them as they did with members of their own nation. This was the line of argument urged by the objectors from Jerusalem.

It is easy to see that such an objection would place Peter in a dilemma. Perhaps he was tempted to think he had swung to an unwarranted extreme; that James himself would not sanction his actions; that his actions were giving offense to his brethren. At any rate, Peter closed his intimate relations with the Gentiles and separated himself from them. The only recorded reason for this action is that he feared them of the circumcision. What does that mean? The "circumcision" evidently means Christians who had been converted from the Jewish faith—converted Jews. But why did Peter fear the converted Jews? Surely not because of any bodily harm that might come to him. Since Pentecost he had repeatedly shown that he had no fear of bodily harm. His fear was not that they of the circumcision might hurt him, but that he by his actions might hurt them of the circumcision. If by continuing his close relations with the Gentiles he should

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offend the Jewish Christians and lose his influence over them, and perhaps alienate them from Christianity itself, his conduct would certainly be harmful. It would be better for him to separate himself, at least for a time, from such close contact with the Gentiles. Thus Peter probably reasoned. At any rate, he withdrew and separated himself from them.

This act on the part of Peter has generally been interpreted as a mark of weakness or cowardice, and as a return to the same spirit that possessed him on the night of the denial. However, it is not necessary to so consider his conduct. In the light of the interpretation just given, his act may well be considered as a mistake in judgment rather than a display of weakness or cowardice. Peter evidently acted sincerely, though he was mistaken in his judgment. And when Paul withstood him to the face and, by the argument recorded in the second chapter of Galatians, pointed out his error, we have every reason to believe that Peter corrected his error, for the later epistles of both Paul and Peter reveal nothing to indicate that Peter continued a blameworthy at-



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titude toward Christian doctrine and practice. Much to the contrary, however, is revealed.

Moreover, there is no evidence of a controversy carried on between Peter and Paul, or of a strained relation existing between them, as is so often represented. The fact that Paul withstood Peter to the face means nothing more than that in a frank way Paul declared to Peter his error. There is every reason to believe that Peter received the words in the same manly way in which they were spoken. No trace of ill-feeling on his part toward Paul is revealed in his writings. On the contrary, there is evidence of a most brotherly feeling, such as that in the thirteenth verse of his second epistle, where Peter speaks of Paul as "our beloved brother." Peter and Paul were friends. They had been friends before the incident at Antioch. They were friends afterward, by the testimony of their writings. There is no reason for believing that they were not friends at the time the incident occurred. It is a weakness in judgment to conclude that because one person criticises the conduct of another, that therefore they two are not

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friends. It is an error to assume that because people differ in opinions and express opposite views that therefore they are not friends. One of the sacred privileges of friendship is the unrestrained expression of opinion, and that without any thought of offense. This privilege Paul and Peter exercised, and are not to be condemned because of it. Men who can frankly express opinion and as frankly receive the opinions of others, are deserving of our respect rather than our censure.

The censure directed against Peter because of his conduct in the incident at Antioch is mitigated somewhat by the fact that he was not entirely alone in his actions. Others of unquestioned sincerity and courage took the same view of the case that Peter did. Paul says, "Other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." In the minds of such men as Peter and Barnabas there were evidently good grounds for the position taken. They were mistaken, but theirs was the mistake of men with good intentions. The mistake was of the judgment and not of the heart. Nevertheless the mis-

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take had its bad effects, which Paul felt called upon to correct. He therefore called the mistaken men to their senses. The mistake was apparently not persisted in, and the evil results were not very far-reaching. The results were not disastrous so far as the relations between Peter and Paul were concerned. Nor were the results disastrous to the future loyalty and usefulness of either.

This incident at Antioch, while it may be considered unfortunate in the early history of the Church, yet has its practical suggestions for the Church in all ages.

It suggests how easy it is for well-meaning Christians to err in their judgment. In those early beginnings of the Church life Christian men made mistakes. Their errors were prophetic of those that men in every future age would make. The Church never has been free from mistakes, nor will she be in the years ahead. But the disgraceful chapters in her history are not those recording mistakes. The disgraceful chapters are those which record something worse than mistakes. We need not grieve greatly because mistakes are made, so long as the intent is right. The problems of the Christian

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life and the life of the Kingdom are so complicated that mistakes are likely to occur. If the mistakes be those of the judgment and not of the heart, there is small ground for condemnation.

The attitude for Christians to assume toward these mistakes is one of charity rather than censure. The exhortation of Paul in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is applicable here. Charity is needed. If one errs in his conduct and falls below the standard of religious living as we see that standard, the right course to pursue would be that of Paul in the incident at Antioch—enlighten rather than condemn. Paul in this case had a better vision of proper conduct than did Peter. He had more light. Having more light, he gave it to Peter. His example is worthy of imitation. He firmly but kindly opposed the wrong conduct and pointed out a better course. Better far would it be in the Church to-day if erring Peters were thus kindly but firmly dealt with by Pauls possessed of better light, instead of making the transgressor the object of slanderous gossip and bitter reproach.

This incident at Antioch suggests, too,

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that it is the right of Christians to be permitted to point out in kindness the errors of their fellow-Christians. The injunction to bear one another's burdens is clearly a Christian one. One of the ways of bearing those burdens is helping another to get rid of error in practice or belief. Because of immaturity in experience and limitations in knowledge, young disciples of the Lord are very likely to become guilty of mistaken actions and notions. Evidently the way to improvement in such cases is through a recognition of the mistakes. And who has a better right to point out the mistakes than the fellow-Christian who may have wider knowledge and who is supposed to have at heart the highest interests of all his brethren. The fact is that if the Church, instead of censuring such incidents as this ancient attempt to set right an erring brother, would encourage such attempts as the inherent right of Christian fellowship, more rapid progress would be made toward better ideals of Christian life.

Finally, this incident suggests that Christians should be willing to receive friendly criticism and admonition in a friendly way. Peter evidently did so, and profited by such

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a course. Modern Christians would do well to display a similar willingness to know defects and improve upon them. One of the last admissions some people are willing to make is that they are wrong or have been mistaken. Yet it is evident that the way to improvement is effectually blocked as long as one refuses to make that admission. One of the first steps toward future perfection is the recognition of present imperfection. It follows, then, that the person who points out to another a defect has done a real service by making possible an improvement of life. It is becoming and quite wise on the part of those who are informed of their defects to kindly accept the criticism given and profit by it, instead of fostering ill-will toward the one pointing out the error. One of the charming graces of Christian character should be that of accepting brotherly correction as an opportunity for improvement rather than as an occasion for bitterness.

John Ruskin, in speaking of the erroneous creeds held by some people, said, "I want to macadamize some new roads to heaven with broken foolsheds." The words were

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a protest against some errors of theological belief. A similar protest needs to be uttered against some errors of practical belief. The way to a better heaven on earth might be macadamized by broken misconceptions concerning Christian relationships. If men would destroy forever the notions that differences of opinion are grounds for the estrangement of lives; that the offering of kindly criticism is an offense instead of a favor; that the reception of kindly criticism should invite revenge rather than reformation, then a better highway to more heavenly human relationships would be assured.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTS.

THE incident at Antioch discussed in the last chapter closes the history of Peter's career so far as the New Testament is concerned, with the exception that a few meager suggestions are given in the two epistles bearing his name. These suggestions indicate the unfailing interest which Peter continued to manifest in the cause of Christ. They imply that after the incident at Antioch his spirit of evangelism carried him far from the mother Church at Jerusalem and his friends at Antioch. The First Epistle of Peter seems to have been written from "Babylon," where Peter had been visited by Silvanus, who is called a faithful brother. The meaning of the word "Babylon" has been a matter of much discussion. Some have contended that the city on the Euphrates in the East is meant. Others have argued that the term is a symbolic one for the city of Rome, and therefore it was from the Imperial City that Peter sent his letter



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to the Christians of Asia Minor. These persons argue also that the letter was sent to the Christians of Asia Minor by the hand of Silvanus, whose name is mentioned in the letter. This view is held by many who do not accept the theory of the Roman Catholic Church that Peter was the first bishop of Rome. The view that the "Babylon" from which Peter wrote his first letter is the city of Rome, is one most generally held by careful Bible students, though many strongly oppose this view and contend for the city on the Euphrates.

The origin of the Second Epistle of Peter is also a matter of some doubt. While the history of the letter itself is uncertain, it yet makes certain the fact that the end of Peter's life is not far away. In the letter Peter says, "Shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." This letter also suggests that the friendly relation between Peter and Paul was still unbroken. Toward the end of the letter Peter speaks of Paul as "our beloved brother Paul," and in the same connection commends the doctrine of Paul as contained in his letters to the disciples of Jesus.

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It appears, then, that from reliable historic sources we get very little concerning the end of Peter's life. There is, however, a great mass of statements concerning his last days found in traditional sources. In this mass there is likely a mingling of some fact with much fancy. It becomes a difficult task in some instances to distinguish the fact from the fancy. These traditional accounts are full of interest, and while not entirely trustworthy, may yet serve to throw some light on the closing days of the life of Peter.

The well-known assumption of the Church of Rome is that Peter spent his last days in the city of Rome and met his death there. This assumption is based on a tradition which declares that Peter first visited Rome about 40 A. D., remaining there but a short time, and returning to Jerusalem, where he was imprisoned by Herod Agrippa, as recorded in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Acts. After his miraculous release from prison, Peter returned to Rome according to the tradition. Persecutions of Christians in the Imperial City drove him again to the city of Jerusalem, where he happened to be at the

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time of the first Christian council, in 51 A. D. After this conference in Jerusalem, Peter returned to Rome, this being his third visit to that city. He there engaged in active Christian work, making converts and laying firmly the foundations of the future Church. The tradition asserts that Peter was still at Rome when Paul arrived for his imprisonment there. The messengers sent to meet Paul at Appii Forum and the Three Taverns were sent by Peter, so the tradition says. It also describes how Peter and Paul worked together in Rome until the persecution under Nero brought both to death. During this persecution Peter was persuaded by Christian friends to attempt to escape. But as he left the city he saw the Lord in a vision and said to Him, "Lord, where goest Thou?" The Lord answered, "To Rome to be crucified yet again." Peter himself then went back to the city, being now willing to go even to death with his Master. Ultimately Peter was brought to his death by the ignominious process of crucifixion. The tradition has it that Peter felt himself unworthy to die exactly as his Lord had died, therefore requested that as a mark of his own unworthi-

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ness he might be crucified with his head downward. His request was granted, and thus gladly the apostle came to the martyr's death. So the tradition says.

Another tradition asserts that at Peter's request his friends built a tower for him in the city of Rome, where he might live in seclusion and in humility to the end of his days. He lived in this tower for six years and then died. He was buried within that tower. This old tradition says, "And this tower may be seen in Rome and they call it Peter, which is a word for a stone, because he sat in a stone to the day on his death."

This account of Peter's death is so unnatural and unhistoric in tone that it precludes serious consideration. The story bears on its face evidences of fantastic creation. The tradition of the Church of Rome, on the other hand, mingles with its fancy so much of possible fact that it deserves more careful consideration.

The claims of the Roman tradition are in the main reasonable, but their fatal lack is a basis in historical fact. The sources of these claims are not historic, but speculative. As one authority has pointed out, these claims

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of Rome “are an inheritance not from the authentic teachings of the apostles or the Apostolic Church, but from the Ebionite heretics whom she condemned.”

The claims of Rome that Peter was in touch with the affairs of the Christian Church in Rome for a quarter of a century, and that the last years of his life were lived there as the head of the Church, seem exceedingly unlikely, inasmuch as no mention of such facts is made by any of the New Testament writers. St. Luke includes Rome in the history of the early Church as recorded in Acts. He describes the arrival of Paul and himself in Rome, and their meeting with the chief of the Jews there. But no mention is made of Peter as being in Rome. Had he been found there, Luke could hardly have omitted the mention of that fact. Again, Paul, in writing his letters from Rome, mentions the presence there of Luke, Demas, Tychicus, Aristarchus, Epaphroditus, Marcus, and Epaphras. But there is no mention of Peter. It is impossible to believe that both Luke and Paul would have failed to mention the presence of Peter in Rome had he been there, especially since the mention of his

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presence would have been a matter of such interest to Christians everywhere.

While the New Testament writers are silent concerning the residence of Peter in Rome, some outside sources make mention of his being in that city. Whether this mention is based on fact or tradition is a disputed question. Dionysius of Corinth, Irenæus, Tertullian, and others mention the presence of Peter and Paul in Rome as co-laborers.

In view of all these facts, about the safest conclusion at which one may arrive is, that while there is no convincing evidence that Peter ever lived for any considerable time in Rome, and while the contention that he was the first pope of Rome is utterly unhistoric, yet it is probable that in the course of his evangelistic labors Peter visited Rome. It is probable, too, that there he met the martyr's death during the persecutions under Nero. On the other hand, it is not probable that Peter and Paul were laborers together for any great length of time in Rome, else mention of Peter's presence would have been made in the writings of Paul. It is likely that Peter visited Rome toward the close of his career. The persecution under Nero be-

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gan about 64 A. D. It was likely during this persecution that Peter reached Rome, being, as Farrar suggests, brought there as a prisoner, or coming to strengthen the Jewish Christians in the trying time of their persecution. We know that Peter was in Jerusalem at the time of the council at Jerusalem, in 51 A. D. He was evidently not in Rome when Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in that city, for no mention of his presence is made by Paul. Had Peter been in Rome, Paul would doubtless have known that fact and made mention of it. Peter was evidently not present during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, from 61 to 63 or 64 A. D., for in none of the epistles written during that period does Paul mention his presence. Nor is any mention of him made in the epistles written during Paul's second imprisonment, from 66 to 67 A. D. In the face of all these facts, it seems reasonable to conclude that Peter went to Rome shortly before his death, and after brief labors there met his martyrdom, as did Paul about the year 68 or 69 A. D. It is the opinion of many scholars that the epistles written by Peter were written from Rome during these brief labors

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there, and that the "Babylon" mentioned in the First Epistle is the city of Rome, since it is known that the term "Babylon" was frequently used in the early history of the Church to designate that city.

A tradition claims that the wife of Peter, after being faithful with him in his evangelistic labors, likewise met the martyr's death in the Neronian persecution. It is said that Peter, upon seeing his wife led forth to death, rejoiced at her "journey homeward," and for her encouragement addressed to her the words, "O, remember the Lord." With the memory of the Lord's death for her brought thus to her mind, she bravely went to death for Him. Not a great while later she was followed by her husband, who long ago had said, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both to prison and to death." Once he had shown that he was not ready. Now he was ready. Already he had gone with the Lord to prison; now he gladly went with Him to death.

A legend of Jerusalem suggests the conception which the people in those early days had of the method of Peter's personal ministry, and likewise pays tribute to the faith which the people had in his unusual power



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as an apostle. A woman whose husband was sick appealed to Peter to prolong the husband's life. Peter answered, "I will on condition that you become a beggar." The woman replied: "I do not need to become a beggar. I have money enough to support us." Peter said: "You must not beg for money, but for time. Go, and any time you can beg from another's life I will add to the life of your husband." The woman went and found one of the ten lepers who were cleansed. She begged time from him, but his answer was: "No; I have lost too much time already. I can spare no more." She next found the young man whom Jesus raised from the dead, and begged time from him. His reply was that, having been dead once, he had a still greater desire to live, and would not hasten death again by giving up part of his time. Thus one refusal after another was received until finally the thought came to her, "Why not give from your own life." She returned to Peter and asked if she might give of her own time. Her request was granted. Peter then took one-half of her remaining days and added them to the life of the husband, and the happy couple continued the

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journey of life side by side and finally together crossed the river of death. So the legend runs. It may have been originated to show that Peter taught the lesson that the Lord taught the world, namely, the joy and profit of self-sacrifice for the sake of another.

Traditions describing in detail the death and burial of Peter are not lacking. Reference to the manner of his death has already been made. It is stated that after he had been bound to the cross, he made an address to the friends gathered around him, saying: "O, great and profound secret of the Cross! It is by it that God draws all to Him. It is the Tree of Life which has destroyed the Empire of Death; it is by the fruit of this tree, O Savior, that Thou hast opened my eyes; open now the eyes of all present that they too may contemplate the consolation of eternal life."

After the death of Peter, his body was taken from the cross by one of Peter's Roman converts by the name of Marcellus. It was buried beneath a terebinth tree, and that night Marcellus stood watch over the grave. In the night, it is said, Peter appeared to Marcellus and spoke comforting words, and

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commissioned him to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. Marcellus related this appearance to the other disciples, and they were all greatly comforted. It is also said that shortly after his death Peter appeared to Nero and prophesied a terrible fate, which greatly alarmed the emperor.

Traditional accounts also assert that the body of Peter was buried in the Catacombs, about two miles outside the city, and that after resting there eighteen months, the body was taken up and buried on the Vatican Hill. It is supposed that after many years had passed the bones were again taken up and somewhat scattered, so that part of the body now rests beneath the Church of S. Paolo fuori le Mura and another part in a vault known as the Confessio di S. Pietro in the great Cathedral in Rome, while the head is supposed to rest in the Basilica of S. Giovanni in Laterano. It must not be forgotten, however, that in all this mass of statements we are dealing with tradition and not with history.

It is to be regretted that the closing days of the life of St. Peter are wrapped in so much mystery and colored with so much of

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fantastic tradition. But whatever the real historic facts in the case may be, we may feel assured that the humble fisherman, exalted as he was by the authority of the Christ and empowered as he was by the baptism at Pentecost, came to the end of his troubled career with the fidelity and courage of a Christian soldier. For his life with its range of experiences, we are thankful. We pity him in his mistakes. We weep with him in his penitence. We honor him in his daring endeavor. We rejoice with him in his empowering. We glory in his vast service for the Kingdom. We behold in him an example of the beauty and fruitage God is able to produce in a life barren of talent and oppressed by many human frailties.

The poem which follows furnishes a fitting close to this volume and also breathes a prayer which will find a response in the heart of every admirer of the Exalted Fisherman, Peter the Apostle:

Lord, when temptations crowd my day,  
And I the hostile throng must face,  
Keep me from drifting far away  
To skulk in guilt and sore disgrace,  
As Peter did!

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Should I from holy ways depart  
And some sad day my Lord deny,  
With tear-wet eyes and contrite heart  
To Thee for pardon may I cry,  
As Peter did!

When Skepticism's flings would dare  
Christ's Deity to undermine,  
May I with unmoved faith declare,  
"Thou art the Christ, God's Son Divine,"  
As Peter did!

And when the Pentecostal shower  
Shall baptize men for holy strife,  
May I receive the heaven-sent power  
To teach lost souls the way of life,  
As Peter did!

When civic wrong and social ill  
Would seal the lips that should condemn,  
With, "What is RIGHT, that speak I will,"  
In boldness I would answer them,  
As Peter did!

When life's long march comes to a halt,  
And I from earth's cares find release,  
May I in death the Christ exalt  
And close a toil-worn life in peace,  
As Peter did!

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