



Life Talks



By
James H. McConkey

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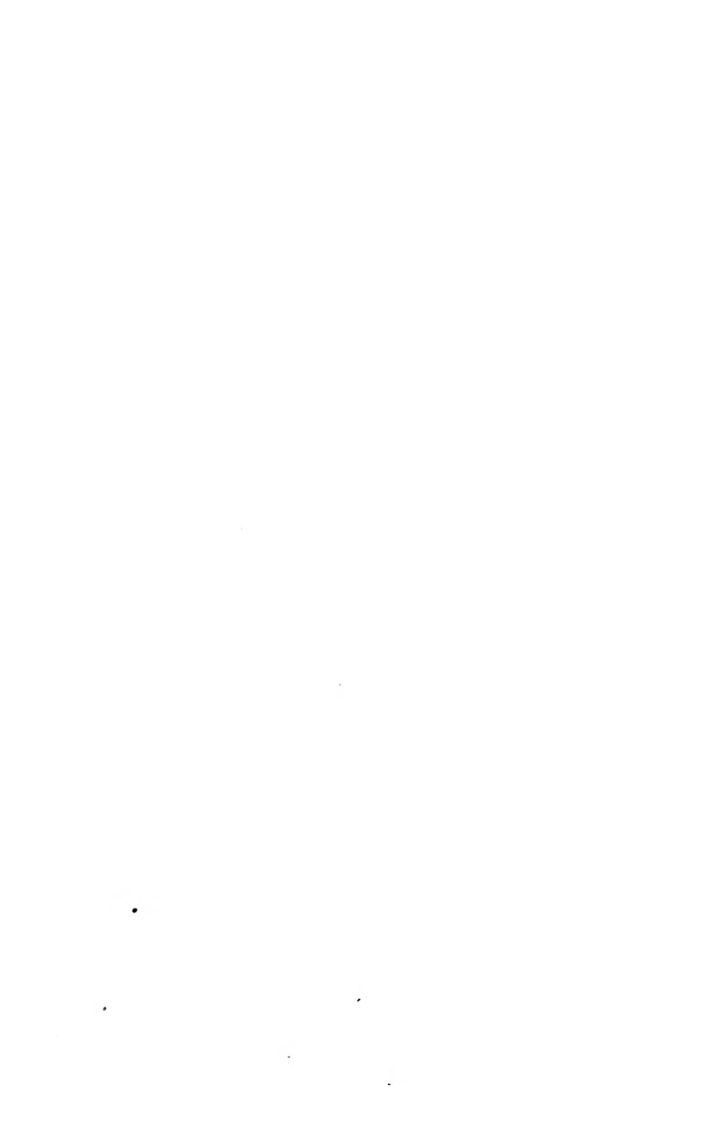
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Life Talks



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Christian Life

By JAMES H. MCCONKEY

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Chastening.

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."—
Heb. 12:6.

How deep is the mystery of God's chastening of His children! And how the soul shrinks at the very mention of the word! Yet, in this Hebrews passage is set forth some of the most precious teaching of God's Word as to His loving dealing with the lives of His own. Let us give heed to it. For it touches the deeps of Christian experience in that it brings us face to face with God's wondrous grace in over-ruling the mystery of suffering to the enrichment and unspeakable blessing of the lives of His children. And let us note, first, that

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Chastening is God's "CHILD-TRAINING."

That is what the word means. It is built upon the Greek word "child." It is the root-word for "child" with the verb termination added to it. It means "to deal with as a child," to "child-train." Nine times in the passage occurs the word "son," "child," and "father." God is speaking to His own. We are His own dear children.

He has brought us into His great family. And now having saved us, He is going to train us. Up there is the homeland and the glory; down here is the suffering. He is even over-ruling the suffering to child-train us for the glory. And thus what sweetness and preciousness flow forth from this much mis-understood fragment of His Word as we invest it with this its literal significance. Let us read it into the whole passage and mark the blessing in it.

* * * *

“My son, despise not thou the child-training of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He child-traineth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure child-training, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father child-traineth not? But if ye be without child-training, whereof all are partakers, then ye are bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days child-trained us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no child-training for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

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Chastening is for PURIFICATION.

Does God have a grudge against us? Is God trying as it were, to "get even" with us? Is God's "child-training" a kind of parental revenge for childish wrong-doing? Oft-times we think so. But it is far from the truth. "For they" (our earthly parents) *verily for a few days child-trained us after their own pleasure, but He FOR OUR PROFIT, that we might be PARTAKERS OF HIS HOLINESS.*" (v. 10.) God's one supreme purpose in child-training us, is purification. He is seeking to purge from us all that mars the likeness of Jesus Christ within us. It is His own holiness that He is seeking to perfect within us.

A visitor was watching a silversmith heating the silver in his crucible. Hotter and hotter grew the fires. All the while the smith was closely scanning the crucible. Presently the visitor said: "Why do you watch the silver so closely? What are you looking for?" "I am looking for my face," was the answer. "When I see my own image in the silver, then I stop. The work is done." Why did the silversmith light the fires under the silver? To purify and perfect it. Is God's child-training an executioner visiting upon us the wrath of God? Nay, it is rather a cleansing angel pouring forth upon us the love of God. The furnace, the suffering, the agony of child-training, what do they mean? *God is looking for a face!* It is the face of His Son. "For He

hath fore-ordained us to be conformed to the image of His Son. And He is purging from us in child-training all that dims that image. Therefore, child of God, do not be associating chastening only with the word "chastise." Couple it also with that beautiful word "chastity," the jewel of perfect, spotless purity of heart and life. Thus "chasten" is to "*chaste-en.*" It is to *make chaste*, to make pure, spiritually. To purge, to cleanse, to purify—that is God's great purpose in all His "child-training."

Like all true parents, therefore, God has a model, a pattern to which He is fashioning the lives of His children. That pattern is Jesus Christ. And God's great purpose is that Christ should be "formed in us." Thus the will of the Father is perfect. But the will of the child must be plastic. For how can the will of the Father be carried out unless the will of the child be yielded? Otherwise may not the child baffle at every step the highest purpose of the Father for the life of the child? You can do anything with an obedient child. You can do nothing with a disobedient one. Wherefore *the first great lesson God is seeking to teach in chastening is—*

* * * *

OBEDIENCE.

"Though He were a Son yet *learned He obedience through the things which He suffered*" is the wondrous word spoken of the Lord Himself.

And have you not noted how true this is in the lives of all God's children? The chamber of suffering—is it not the birth-place of obedience? Is not the crowning grace of utter submission to His will wrought out in the place of affliction as nowhere else? Go sometimes into such a chamber of suffering. There lies one of God's "shut-ins." For years she has been in the fiery furnace of affliction. By and by you express the hope that this affliction may pass away. A smile flits over the wan face. Quickly from the trembling lips drops this sentence: "If it be God's will."—Not her own will, but God's! That is the first thought. The words, the spirit, the life of the sufferer all image forth one great truth—absolute submission to the will of God. Somehow—we know not how—but, *somehow*, this spirit of obedience, of perfect submission to the will of God is wrought out in the furnace and the crucible as in no other experience of life. How many of us strong-willed men and women have found that to be true!

We recall a striking story from the lips of a friend. A lady was summering in Switzerland. One day she started out for a stroll. Presently, as she climbed the mountain-side, she came to a shepherd's fold. She walked to the door and looked in. There sat the shepherd. Around him lay his flock. Near at hand, on a pile of straw, lay a single sheep. It seemed to be in suffering. Scanning it closely, the lady saw that its leg was

broken. At once her sympathy went out to the suffering sheep. She looked up inquiringly to the shepherd. "How did it happen?" she said. To her amazement, the shepherd answered: "Madam, I broke that sheep's leg." A look of pain swept over the visitor's face. Seeing it, the shepherd went on: "Madam, of all the sheep in my flock, this one was the most wayward. It never would obey my voice. It never would follow in the pathway in which I was leading the flock. It wandered to the verge of many a perilous cliff and dizzy abyss. And not only was it disobedient itself, but it was ever leading the other sheep of my flock astray. I had before had experience with sheep of this kind. So I broke its leg. The first day I went to it with food, it tried to bite me. I let it lie alone for a couple of days. Then, I went back to it. And now, it not only took the food, but licked my hand, and showed every sign of submission and even affection. And now let me tell you something. When this sheep is well, as it soon will be, it will be the model sheep of my flock. No sheep will hear my voice so quickly. None will follow so closely at my side. Instead of leading its mates astray, it will now be an example and a guide for the wayward ones, leading them, with itself, in the path of obedience to my call. In short, a complete transformation will have come into the life of this wayward sheep. It has learned obedience through its suffering."

Friend, from the suffering of baffled plans which have brought you the keenest disappointment of life: from the suffering of personal bereavements which have torn from your presence loved ones unspeakably precious to your soul; from the suffering of temporal losses and broken fortunes; from the suffering which has stalked into your life through the wilfulness and sin of others; from the suffering which seemed at times to bring you to the brink of a broken faith and a broken heart; yea, suffering one, out of your very agony of heart and soul, somehow, oh, somehow, the eternal God of love and mercy is seeking to bring into your life the supremest blessing that can enrich and glorify that life—the blessing of a human will yielded to the will of God.

And to be yielded to the will of God—what a place is that for you! It means more than silver and gold; more than gratified desires and ambitions; more than all the sweet blandishments of friendship; more than all the praises of men; more than all the prizes of fame; yea, more than the attainment of all your highest earthly aims and strivings is this richest and deepest of all blessings, to be hidden, sunken, swallowed up in the will of God for all time and amid all circumstances. And it is this that God is seeking to teach you through chastening. It is into this hiding place of peace and power from which the world can never dislodge you, that God is striving to bring you by the way of tribulation, disap-

pointment and pain. All that brings you there is worth its costliest price of blood and suffering. Rather than the life out of His will nothing can be too dear-bought that brings us into that will. Rather than miss it, we can spare nothing from our lives that will compass it.

And, now, as God brings us into this place of obedience, He is able to work out in us the next rich out-come of His child-training, and that is:

* * * *

FRUITAGE.

"Afterward it yieldeth . . . FRUIT." (v. II.)

The summer showers are falling. The poet stands by the window watching them. They are beating and buffeting the earth with their fierce down-pour. But the poet sees in his imaginings more than the showers which are falling before his eyes. He sees myriads of lovely flowers which shall soon be breaking forth from the watered earth, filling it with matchless beauty and fragrance. And so he sings:

*"It isn't raining rain for me, it's raining daffodils;
In every dimpling drop I see wild flowers upon the
hills.
A cloud of gray engulfs the day, and overwhelms the
town;
It isn't raining rain for me: it's raining roses down."*

Perchance some one of God's chastened children is even now saying: "O God, it is raining

hard for me to-night. Testings are raining upon me which seem beyond my power to endure. Disappointments are raining fast, to the utter defeat of all my chosen plans. Bereavements are raining into my life which are making my shrinking heart quiver in its intensity of suffering. The rain of affliction is surely beating down upon my soul these days." Withal, friend, you are mistaken. It isn't raining rain for you. It's raining blessing. For, if you will but believe your Father's word, under that beating rain are springing up spiritual flowers of such fragrance and beauty as never before grew in that stormless, un-chastened life of yours. You indeed see the rain. But, do you see, also, the flowers? You are pained by the testings. But God sees the sweet flower of faith which is up-springing in your life under those very trials. You shrink from the suffering. But God sees the tender compassion for other sufferers which is finding birth in your soul. You see the disappointments, but God sees the sweet submission to His divine and perfect will which is growing out of the very same. Your heart winces under the sore bereavement. But God sees the deepening and enriching which that sorrow has brought to you. It isn't raining afflictions for you. It is raining tenderness, love, compassion, patience and a thousand other flowers and fruits of the blessed Spirit which are bringing into your life such a spiritual enrichment as all the fulness of worldly

prosperity and ease was never able to beget in your innermost soul.

And are you saying: "But, what a fruitless branch I must be that God must needs so to purge me?" Nay, not so. Have you not noticed what kind of branches it is that God purges? Hear His word: "Every branch that *beareth fruit*, He purgeth it" (Jno. 15:2). It is not the fruitless but the fruitful branch which is purged. And why? "That it may bring forth *more fruit*." Purging is, therefore, not the proof of worthlessness, but the proof of fruit. For it is only the fruit bearers that are purged. The others are "taken away." Wherefore His purging is both the proof that there is fruit, and the pledge that there shall be more.

* * * *

*God does not expect us to ENJOY chastening, but to ENDURE it for the sake of its AFT-
ERWARD. (v. II.)*

Sometimes we reproach ourselves because we are not *enjoying* affliction. We ought to be like Paul, who, we say, "rejoiced in tribulation." But do we think by this that Paul really *enjoyed* tribulation? Surely not. When they knouted his naked back with the iron points of the leather-thonged scourge, think you he enjoyed it? The stones they hurled at him were no sweet-meat missiles tossed by sportive hands in friendly carnival. They were business-like, merciless, jag-

ged, and went home to their target with blows that crashed him into bloody insensibility. Think you he enjoyed that? The "perils by false brethren" too—do you know what that is?—To have a friend play you false—one whom you had taken to your heart of hearts, one whom you leaned upon, and to whom you poured out your soul, what is that but the stiletto-stab that makes the blood spurt from every vein in your innermost being? Did *you* enjoy that? Surely not. Well, neither did Paul. Neither does any man with flesh, and blood, and nerves, and heart. But what did this old hero of Jesus Christ's kingdom say about the affliction? Listen, "I rejoice in tribulation, *for tribulation worketh,*" etc. He rejoiced not in tribulation, itself, but *amid* tribulation *for the things that came forth from it.* Likewise, God, our Father does not expect us to enjoy child-training. He is not displeased if we find it hard to bear, and shrink under it. Nay, He distinctly says, "it is grievous," and he only asks us to endure it, not for itself, but for the glorious "afterward" which is to come forth from it.

There are three warnings we need amid child-training. In verse five, God admonishes us to:—

* * * *
"Despise Not."

Do not "esteem lightly" God's child-training. Do not look down upon it. Above all, do not let

your heart grow hard and bitter against God because of it. Very needful is this warning to all of us. How many have lost fellowship with God, and have drifted into the dark places of doubt, rebelliousness, and despair because they have suffered their hearts to be embittered against God for his seemingly strange dealings with them! Ah! friend, shun *that* above everything else. "Harden not your heart." Do not rise up in mutiny of spirit against God. When you let *that* serpent coil in your heart, it will sting your innermost soul to the death of peace, and rest, and joy in your Lord. Guard yourself against that. Again in the same verse, comes the warning:—

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"Faint Not!"

How great is the temptation at this point! How the soul sinks, the heart grows sick, and the faith staggers under the keen trials and testings which come into our lives in times of special bereavement and suffering. "I cannot bear up any longer; I am fainting under this providence. What shall I do? God tells me not to faint. But what can one do when he is fainting?" What do you do when you are about to faint physically? You cannot *do* anything. You *cease* from your own doing. In your faintness, you fall upon the shoulder of some strong loved one. You lean hard. You rest. You lie still and trust, until your fainting soul comes back to its own. It is

so when we are tempted to faint under affliction. God's message to us is not "Be strong, and of good courage," for he knows our strength and courage have fled away. But it is that sweet word: "Be still, and know that I am God." Hudson Taylor was so feeble in the closing months of his life, that he wrote a dear friend, "I am so weak I cannot work; I cannot read my Bible; I cannot even pray. I can only lie still in God's arms like a little child, and trust." This wondrous man of God with all his spiritual power came to a place of physical suffering and weakness where he could only lie still and trust. And that is all God asks of you, His dear child, when you grow faint in the fierce fires of affliction. Do not try to *be strong*. Just *be still*, and *know that He is God* and will sustain you, and bring you through.

There is another warning we need in chastening, and it is this:—

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Question Not.

There are some questions the believer may ask of his God. We may say "what" to God. For that is the question of service. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is fair for us to ask that, for we have a right to know the particular ministry He has for us from day to day, even as had Paul. Again, we may say "where" to God. For that is the question of guidance. It is but

right that we should know the *place* of our service; where He would have us walk, as we move on in our daily journey with our Lord. Then, too, we may say "when" to Him. For that is the question of time. And it is well to know His time for all things, that we neither run before Him in our zeal, nor lag behind Him in our slothfulness. But there is one question no child of His should ever put to God concerning God's dealings with him in chastening. *No man should ever say "why" to God.* For "why" is the question of doubt. It is the assassin of faith. It leads us to the brink of a dizzy cliff—the precipice of rebellion against God. No Christian can afford to say it. Our Lord never uttered it save once, "My God, my God, *why* hast Thou forsaken me?" That awful "Why"! It had all His life been a stranger to His lips. And why had it fallen now? Because of *sin*—not His, for He had none. But yours and mine, and the world's, which plunged Him, our sin-bearer, into the black despair of the only hour of separation from God He had ever known in all His eternal existence. And you and I are coming close to sin, with its darkness, and broken fellowship, and its rebellion against God when we began to say "why" to Him. You do not like your little one to say "why" to you, do you? Its mistrust wounds your father-soul. Neither would God have you say it to Him, for it brings like grief to his father-heart.

There are some other things for us to remember too in chastening. The first is:—

* * * *

Remember THE LOVE of God.

Last year there was found in an African mine the most magnificent diamond in the world's history. It was presented to the king of England to blaze in his crown of state. The king sent it to Amsterdam to be cut. It was put in the hands of an expert lapidary. And what do you suppose he did with it? He took this gem of priceless value. He cut a notch in it. Then he struck it a hard blow with his instrument, and lo! the superb jewel lay in his hand, cleft in twain. What recklessness! what wastefulness! what criminal carelessness! Not so. For days and weeks that blow had been studied and planned. Drawings and models had been made of the gem. Its quality, its defects, its lines of cleavage had all been studied with minutest care. The man to whom it was committed was one of the most skilful lapidaries in the world. Do you say that blow was a mistake? Nay. It was the climax of the lapidary's skill. When he struck that blow, he did the one thing which would bring that gem to its most perfect shapeliness, radiance, and jewelled splendor. That blow which seemed to ruin the superb precious stone was in fact its perfect redemption. For from these two halves were wrought the two magnificent gems which the

skilled eye of the lapidary saw hidden in the rough, un-cut stone as it came from the mines.

So, sometimes, God lets a stinging blow fall upon your life. The blood spurts. The nerves wince. The soul cries out in an agony of wondering protest. The blow seems to you an appalling mistake. But it is not, for you are the most priceless jewel in the world to God. And He is the most skilled lapidary in the universe. Some day you are to blaze in the diadem of the King. As you lie in his hand now *He knows* just how to deal with you. Not a blow will be permitted to fall upon your shrinking soul but that the love of God permits it, and works out from it depths of blessing and spiritual enrichment unseen, and unthought-of by you.

* * * *

Remember the FATHERHOOD of God

A visitor at a school for the deaf and dumb was writing questions on the blackboard for the children. By and by he wrote this sentence, "Why has God made me to hear and speak, and made you deaf and dumb?" The awful sentence fell upon the little ones like a fierce blow in the face. They sat palsied before that dreadful "why." And then a little girl arose. Her lip was trembling. Her eyes were swimming with tears. Straight to the board she walked, and, picking up the crayon wrote with firm hand these precious words:—

“*Even so Father for so it seemed good in Thy sight!*” What a reply! It reaches up and lays hold of an eternal truth upon which the maturest believer as well as the youngest child of God may alike unshakeably rest—the truth that *God is your Father*. Do you mean that? Do you really and fully believe that? When you do, then your dove of faith will no longer wander in weary unrest, but will settle down forever in its eternal resting place of peace. “*Your Father!*” Why that takes in everything! Because He is your Father, how *could* He fail, or forget you? Look into your own father heart and mark the strength, the tenderness, the unspeakableness of your love for that winsome little one enshrined in your heart of hearts. Then say to yourself, “God’s Father love for me infinitely surpasses all this.” Your Father! Against that all doubts must at last dash themselves to pieces as the sea-spray beats itself to nothingness upon a rock-bound coast. Down upon that your child-trained soul will find a final resting place in untrembling trustfulness. Rear that up before the devil’s subtle, hideous, hissing “*whv*” and he will stagger back, the unmasked, baffled, beaten traitor that in truth he is.

Give God a Chance.

"Prove me now."—Mal. 3: 10.

In a great city telegraph office scores of instruments were busily clicking away. Presently, in the midst of the din and clatter, the door opened, and in walked a young man—a stranger. He was tall, and rather awkward, with a linen duster reaching nearly to his heels. In response to his request for employment the chief operator motioned him to a chair. By and by another instrument began to click. The most important work of the day was on hand. The press dispatches were ready, at the distant city. And by his table in that city sat one of the swiftest writers, and most skilful operators in the service, waiting to begin his rapid sending. The chief motioned to the tall young man to take his seat at the table at which the press news was to be received. He quietly did so. The other workers lifted their heads from their instruments, to look askance at the rustic stranger in his attempt to "take" the fastest man on the line. They were watching for him to fail. But he had no notion of doing so. Answering the call, he took up his pen and began to write. And there for hour after hour he sat.

Without a break, without a halt; writing a hand like a copper-plate in its clearness and beauty, he tossed off sheet after sheet of copy to the waiting messenger boy, while all the office stared in astonished admiration. When the work was finished, the position was his without any further question. When asked his name, he replied—*Edison*. It was the beginning of his world-wide fame. All he wanted was—a chance. And when he got it he did *marvels*.

And is not this the homely expression of the real thought in the verse from Malachi, cited above. “Bring ye all the tithes. . . *Prove Me* now . . . if I will not open the windows of heaven.” What is God saying here but this? “My child, I still have windows in heaven. They are yet in service. The bolts slide as easily as of old. The hinges have not grown rusty. I would rather fling them open, and pour forth, than keep them shut and hold back. I opened them for Moses, and the sea parted. I opened them for Joshua,—and Jordan rolled back. I opened them for Gideon, and the hosts fled. I will open them for you,—if *you will only let me*. On *this* side of the windows heaven is the same rich store-house as of old. The fountains and streams still overflow. The treasure rooms are still bursting with gifts. The lack is not on My side. It is on yours. *I* am waiting. *I* am ready. *Prove Me* now. Fulfill the conditions, on *your* part. Bring in the tithes. *Give Me a chance*.

And first, then, let us

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Give God a chance,—by TRUSTING.

Faith opens the soul to God. It is the channel down which God's heavenly blessings flow to usward. It is the bridge which leaps the chasm between heaven and earth. It is the ladder over which God's messengers of help journey to us needy earthlings. It is Faith which gives God a chance to work in your life and soul. Turning away from God in un-faith is putting a plate-glass between you and an electric current; it shuts off the flow of life. It is stopping your ears with cotton, so that no note of a song can float in upon your soul. It is wearing a bandage over your eyes, so that no glint of the beauty of dawn or sunset can come to your blinded vision. The life, the light, the song are there. But you shut them out. You give them no chance.

A simple picture illustration comes to mind here. It is that of a human hand. In the hand is an empty bottle. The bottle is under a fountain. The waters are flowing atop, at the sides, all over the bottle. But there is not a drop inside. Underneath is the legend: "Why is the bottle not filled?" The reason is simple. *There is a cork in the bottle. It has no chance.* Even so Faith is the soul's in-take. Through it God's life comes in. Love is the soul's outlet. Through it God's

life pours forth. To clog either is to stay the flow of life. You give God no chance.

Unsaved friend, why do you continue to live in the shadow of death? Why has not the miracle of the new birth been wrought in your soul? Why do you, every moment, stand in jeopardy of a catastrophe which all the years of eternity can never set right? Simply because you will not fulfill God's simple conditions. *You will not accept and trust Jesus Christ as the Saviour of your soul. You will not give God a chance.* Suppose the delicate mechanism of your gold watch has a breakage. You take it to the watchmaker and ask if he can repair it. He says he can, if you will but leave it in his hands for a few days. At once you trust him with it. For you know he can do nothing unless you give him a chance. Or you want your portrait painted. You go to an artist friend. He tells you he will do it. But he says you must come daily to him, for so many sittings. You straightway obey. For you know he cannot paint your portrait unless you give him a chance. Or you go to a dock, and ask the captain of a steamship if he will land you on the other side of the ocean. He says he will, if you will buy a ticket, step aboard the boat, and trust him to carry you over. This too you do. For you know you can never cross the ocean unless you trust yourself to the ship. You must needs give it a chance. How strange then, that you will not give God the same chance in eternal matters which

you give to men in temporal ones! There is a breach in your soul of vastly more moment than the breakage in your watch. God will mend it—if you give Him a chance. There is a picture—the image of Jesus Christ—to be painted upon your inner being,—as upon every other life that would enter heaven. God will paint it—if you give him a chance. There is a journey out into the unknown abyss of eternity, which no man can ever take to save by God's way, and God's guidance. God will pilot you all the way—if you give Him a chance. Be as fair to God in matters of eternity, as you are to men in the concerns of time. Fulfil His simple conditions of salvation. Give yourself to Him. *Trust Him*, in Christ. He will surely save your soul—*if you only give Him a chance.*

* * * *

Give God a chance,—by PRAYING.

There are many things too difficult for you to do. But you do not hesitate to seek some one more skilful and give *him* a chance to do for you. You have a precious gem to re-set. You cannot do it. But you are quick to give the expert jeweler a chance to do it for you. There is a dangerous mountain steep to climb. You do not know how to find the pathway. But you give the mountain guide a chance to lead you in it. There is a deep ford to cross. You cannot risk it. But you

give the hardy ferryman a chance to pilot you across it.

It is not otherwise with you and God. There are many things *you* cannot do. But God says: "If ye *ask* I will do." There are burdens you cannot bear. Give God a chance through prayer, and *He* will bear them for you. There are problems too knotty for your solution. Give *God* a chance by prayer, and God will solve them for you. There are barriers too high for you to overleap. Ask *God*. They are not too high for Him. Somehow when there seems no other chance for *us*, prayer gives *God* a chance. And behold He does for us what we had forever despaired of doing ourselves.

A Christian business friend was in sore straits. A sudden demand had been made upon him for a large sum of money. Every consideration of business honor demanded its payment. Yet he was helpless to meet it. The only possible way out of the crisis seemed to be the sale of a piece of real estate. But the market was discouragingly dull. There was scarcely a buyer in it. In short there was no human chance of selling it. So we determined to give *God* a chance. Spreading the whole matter before Him, we began to pray. After two weeks of earnest supplication a man came to ask our friend if his real estate was in the market. In another week he came again and asked the price. A little later he made our friend an offer. The latter, however, deemed it too low.

So we prayed on, that God might work His perfect will in it all. At the end of six weeks of prayer the sale was made, and our friend came to us with a check for many thousands of dollars in his hand. With tears in his eyes, he said: "It seems to have come as directly from God as though He Himself had handed it to me over the counter of the bank." That was true. It was all *of God*. We had simply given Him a chance.

* * * *

It takes God TIME to answer prayer; give Him a chance.

We often fail to give God a chance in this respect. It takes time for God to paint a rose. It takes time for God to grow an oak. It takes time for God to make bread from a wheat field. He takes the earth. He pulverizes. He softens. He enriches. He wets with showers and dews. He warms with life. He gives the blade, the stock, the amber grain, and then at last the bread for the hungry. All this takes time. Therefore we sow, and till, and wait, and trust, until all God's purpose has been wrought out. We give God a chance in this matter of time. We need to learn this same lesson in our prayer life. It takes God *time* to answer prayer.

A Christian worker had reached the end of the week, well wearied with service. The sunshine and rippling river were luring him to an hour's rowing. Boarding a passing car he was soon

on the way to the river bank. As he neared it he remembered that it was late in the season, and there was a likelihood of the boat-house being closed. But the outing for tired nerves and weary body seemed a clear need. So he lifted his heart quietly in prayer that if it were the Lord's will He might send along the caretaker of the boat-house to furnish the boat. Reaching the spot he found to his disappointment that the house was closed. Turning to leave under the impulse of the moment, the thought flashed in "It has only been a moment or two since you prayed the Lord to send along the boatman, and now you are going away without even waiting long enough for him to get here. Why don't you give God a chance." So he sat down by the river bank to wait. In ten minutes the boat-keeper came strolling along. The house was opened, the boat secured, and the refreshing hour's outing enjoyed to the full. With it came another simple lesson in the prayer-life, that it takes God time to answer prayer, and that we therefore need to give God a chance.

Take this matter of conversion. You have an unsaved loved one. You have prayed for him—for months—for years. He is still outside the kingdom. God has not answered your prayer, you say. But perhaps you are at sea in your view of conversion. Does God bring a soul into His kingdom as you might lift a child over a hedge, or hurl a stone across a stream? Does man's choice

have no place in this? It surely does. It matters not by what theological side-path you approach this matter of conversion. One thing is certain, however God may *move* upon man's will He does not *supplant* that will. Whatever may be the mystery of *God's* choice, no soul ever comes into the kingdom without his own choice.

Hence concerning the conversion of a resisting soul remember this. *God is striving with a human will.* But do you know what it is to move upon a human will? This very loved one *you* have warned. With him *you* have pleaded. With him *you* have reasoned. Yet all these years that strong will has stood out against you. Now, at the last, you have given up in sheer despair the attempt to move upon a human will. Do you not realize then what it means for *God* to do it? God may have heart-idols to overthrow. God may have to foil chosen plans. God may suffer afflictions to come. God must press in upon the man engrossed in the temporal, a growing vision of the eternal. God must needs cherish, woo, disappoint, uplift, bereave, enrich, impoverish,—yea, bring to bear a multitude of influences upon a resisting will, ere it yields to Him. But to unstop ears deaf to the voice of God—to open eyes blind to the vision of God—to turn aside wandering feet into the path of God—all this takes *time*. Therefore—*Give God a chance.*

Give God a chance,—by YIELDING.

*God can do nothing with us if we do not yield—
He has no chance.*

We recall a day of sight-seeing in the palaces of Genoa. From room to room we had followed the care-taker in his tour. Paintings, sculpture, curios of all sorts had followed each other in rapid train. Finally we entered a room seemingly empty. Bare walls, floors, and tables alone greeted us. Presently the guide led us across the room to the wall at the farther side. There we espied a niche in the wall. It was covered with a glass case. Behind the case was a magnificent violin, in perfect preservation. This, said the guide, was Paganini's favorite violin; the rich old Cremona upon which he loved most of all to display his marvelous skill. We gazed intently upon the superb instrument, with its warm, rich tints, sinuous curves, and perfect model, listening meanwhile to the estimate of its almost priceless value. And then we tried to imagine the wondrous strains the touch of the great master would bring forth if he were there in that quiet palace chamber. Then came the thought: Nay. But this could not be. For it would not matter what rich melodies were in the inner soul of the master. It would not avail how eager he might be to pour them forth in sweetest, tenderest strain through that magnificent instrument. He could not possibly do so. For it was locked up against him. It was an

unyielded instrument. It was like thousands of lives which are pad-locked against God, not back of a fragile, easily shattered glass case, but behind the impenetrable armor plate of an unyielded human will. *It gave the Master no chance.*

Friend, is this why your life seems barren and fruitless? Is this why God does not seem to be using that life? Is it that, however willing, He cannot use it because unyielded to Him? For this picture of an instrument is no fancy, but the very one God employs in His Word. "Present your members as *instruments* to God," He says. And how can He use an un-presented instrument? The very word "present" pictures the secret of your trouble. It means "to place near the hand" of one; to set at the hand of another as one might set a tool or instrument. To be a surrendered man, a yielded man, is simply to be God's *handy man*. The carpenter is at work. Some of his tools are hanging on the wall of his workshop. Some are right at hand on his work-bench. When he wants one quickly and urgently which will he use? The one he can reach quickest—the one "set at his hand." This is precisely where God wants your life. Not hanging on the wall of selfishness, but yielded—reachable—usable. This is what gives God a chance.

Moses, with his hesitation and stammering tongue, seemed but a weak instrument. But he gave God a chance. And God made him the law-giver and leader of His people. Gideon looked

with fear and trembling upon the great work before him. Yet he gave God a chance. And God routed a great and mighty host with his puny lamps and pitcher. David was but a stripling shepherd, shut up in obscurity. But he gave God a chance. And God brought him to a throne. The little lad with the loaves and fishes had but a mite. But he gave God a chance. And the Master brake, and brake the morsels until a famishing multitude was fed before the wondering eyes of the grateful boy. The man on the Damascus road gave God a chance on that fateful day. And God shook the world with him. Seven weary fishermen peered through the morning gloaming upon the form of one standing upon the shore. The night was far spent. The day was at hand. The hour for successful fishing was past. But when the voice rang out over the waters: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship," they yielded to the Master. And He gave them such a catch as they had never known in all their fisher days—when they gave Him the chance.

It is not how much do you have, but how much of yours does God have. It is not a question of bemoaning what you have not, but of yielding what you have. One talent yielded, is worth more than ten simply possessed. Is your handful of grain in the hands of the sower? That bit yielded, is worth more than a bin, boarded. The nugget of gold, which has been minted and coined, and is purchasing hourly blessing as it passes

from hand to hand, is worth all the undug tons of treasure which the earth conceals.

Reader, you have given pleasure a chance. Has it paid? You are giving ambition a chance. Does it satisfy? You are giving money-getting a chance. Is it for self or God? Have a care. When life comes to an end is it going to be ashes—emptiness—fruitlessness? What a pity! Try God. Give *Him* a chance. What is your life, anyhow? Where is it centered? On self or God? Is it counting for eternity? Or only for time? Sit down a while and think, not only about your *soul*, but your *life*. Ask yourself not necessarily what *God's* judgment will be, but what *your own* honest verdict upon your life will be if it goes on to the finish exactly as it is now. Any Christian man who will do that honestly will begin to live for God. He will see that an immortal life which does not take into account God's eternal plan for it, must be a failure.

Friend, when you come to the end where the world will have shriveled to its true littleness, and eternity loomed up to its real bigness; when the things which are seen are really found to be temporal and the things which are unseen, eternal; when you are on the brink of stepping over into the glory where God is all and in all; then you will be glad, oh, so glad, that to-day, when you finished this message, you laid it down and decided that as for *you* and your life, from this time forth you would

Give—God—a—chance.

The Blood-Covenant.

John 15: 13-15.—“Greater love hath no man **than** this, that a man *lay down his life* for his friends. Ye are My friends *if ye do whatsoever I command you*. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you.”

“And Abraham was called *the Friend of God*.”—James 2: 23.

In the days of Abraham, the relation of friendship was entered into by a rite which was peculiar and significant. Two men, desiring to come into the place of friendship with each other, constituted that friendship by this rite, which was known as “The Blood-Covenant.” The parties came together with a common cup. Each man pricked his arm with a sharp instrument, and allowed a few drops of blood to flow into the cup. Sometimes this commingled blood was also mixed with water. Then each man drank from the cup which contained the blood of each. When they had so drunk, they were constituted friends by this custom of their tribe. From this rite of friendship sprang some beautiful and interesting truths we desire to bring before you at this time

in our study of the Word of God. The first one is this:—

* * * *

Each man LAID DOWN HIS OWN LIFE for the other.

As he cut the arm and allowed the blood to trickle into the cup, he allowed his own life to flow forth. For “the blood is the life.” And each man, in type, by that rite laid down his own life on behalf of the other. “Now, Abraham was called the friend of God.” And we are told in one place that, in entering into covenant relation with God, Abraham “cut” a covenant with God, as though in relation to this interesting rite among the tribes. Abraham was then called “The friend of God.”

The time came when God called upon Abraham to stand the supreme test of friendship:—to pour out his own life, if need be, for his blood-covenant Friend, the God of Heaven. “Abraham, take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering.” That was the supreme test. Abraham was to give up his own life—yea, more than his own life—for doubtless he would far rather have laid down his own life than the life of Isaac. You know the story. You recall the picture of the father, with breaking heart, and the bright-faced lad, going up the mountain path together:—the angel of God staying the hand of the father. and the marvellous grace and compassion of

God which spared Abraham's only son. But the time came when Abraham's seed needed some one to die for them; to show His love for them even unto death. And though He spared Abraham's son, yet "God spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all." Ah! how Jesus Christ, our blood-covenant Friend, kept that blood-covenant for you and me! How He poured out His life in suffering, even unto death! They arraigned Him; they tried Him; they bore false witness against Him; they smote Him in the face; they scourged Him; they spat upon Him; they mock-worshipped Him; they crucified Him; they jeered at Him; they wagged their heads at Him; they railed on Him;—but nothing could shake His purpose to pour out His own life for us, His blood-covenant friends. We sing, "What a Friend we have in Jesus." We sang it a moment ago, and who could doubt it? No friend—no one bound to us by the tenderest and most sacred ties of this world's relationships, has ever stood the test of friendship as Jesus Christ did in the laying down of His life for us. But, dear friends, can we take the other side of the truth and say "Has Jesus Christ a friend in me? Have I laid down *my* life at His feet?" Turn sometime to 2 Cor. 5:15, and there note the three-fold purpose of His death. "He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them." "*He died*"—for us. "*He died*" *that we might*

live. “He died” that we who live—*should no longer live unto ourselves.* Ah! we have met the purpose of Christ’s death for us as sinners. We have accepted it. We have believed and have been brought from eternal death to eternal life. But is it possible that any of us are baffling the third great purpose of Jesus Christ’s death—the purpose that the believer, who has been delivered from the guilt of sin, and unto eternal life, should give his life to his blood-covenanted Friend!

Do I love the Lord Jesus Christ? That is a real personal question. How may I know that I love Him? “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man *lay down his life* for his friends.” Ah! I may speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and yet I may not love my Lord. I may have all wisdom and all knowledge, and have the faith that moves mountains, and yet I may not love my Lord. I may give my body to be burned, and yet I may not love my Lord, supremely. But there is one thing He says I may do which is the supreme test of love to Him:—“Greater love hath no man than this, that *a man lay down his life*” for Jesus Christ. We cannot lay it down in atonement as He did. But we can lay it down as a blessed, precious living sacrifice at His feet, and thus be His friend. Again:—

Each man RECEIVED THE LIFE *of the other.*

When each man took that cup, and drank of the blood his friend had allowed to drip into it, he received the life of his friend in type. For the blood is the life. And as he drank the blood he drank the life. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood: drink ye all of it." I wonder if His mind did not go back to that beautiful picture of hundreds of years before, and if He did not mean to make use of that to make so vivid the great truth that he had poured out His blood in that cup for them to drink, in type. I say, each man received the life of the other. "Oh! but," you say, "how could this be true of Jesus, our blood-covenant Friend?" Listen:—"He took not on Him the nature of *angels*, but the seed of *Abraham*," His blood-covenant friend. He took our human nature, did He not? He might have been a mighty angel. He might have gone back and forth between heaven and earth, making occasional visits to this sin-stained, dying world, in all the radiance of His angelic presence. But, oh! there was more in His divine heart of love than that for us. He took not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He became *a man* that He might suffer with us;—that He might be "a High Priest that could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" that He might be "tempted even as we are, yet apart from sin;" that He might enter into every condition of

our human life;—that He might be a God who would actually partake of our human nature and drink of our own human cup of sorrow, trial, testing, weariness, and weeping. Yet He did even more than that. *Not only did He take our life, as it were, but we have received His life!* He took our human nature up to God; He brought God's divine nature down to us. He, who was the Son of God, became a man. We who are men become, by faith in Him, the sons of God. How wonderful is this truth! And how God seems to want to emphasize this, next to the atonement of Jesus Christ for sins:—*that the life of Christ comes into you and into me as we believe in Jesus Christ.* Turn to Hebrews, chap. 6, verses 13-17. "For when God made promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He *swore* by Himself, saying, 'Surely blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee.' And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men swear by the greater; and in every dispute of theirs, the oath is final for confirmation. Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed with an *oath*." What wonderful thing is this that God condescends to swear shall be given to the heirs of promise? God comes down to the sanctions which men themselves use, and swears that *the blessing of Abraham*, His blood-covenant friend, shall come upon the heirs of promise. "Well,"

we say, "but that must be some Jewish promise: something for the natural seed of Abraham." But now turn to Galatians (3: 14), and see how wondrously God himself puts his finger upon this promise, that we might never err or mistake its nature. He swears that the blessing of Abraham shall come upon the heirs of the promise.

And who are these heirs? And what is this promise? Let us read—"That upon *the Gentiles* might come *the blessing of Abraham* in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

"*The promise of the Spirit:*"—that was the blessing, that which was to come on the Gentiles; the Spirit of God; the very life of God which was to be received through Jesus Christ when men believed in Him. The instant the Gospel is preached at the formation of the young church, and men begin to cry out—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the answer comes as we have it in Acts 2: 38. What God swore to happens. "Repent and be baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall receive *the Holy Ghost.*" How plain!—that the instant we believe in him, the very life of God himself comes into you and me! I have no theory concerning the Holy Spirit. I have no controversy with you concerning His indwelling. But I do say that God swears that every child of His that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall receive the Spirit of God. Can we

ever doubt that to which God has sworn? If we are His children, let us believe that the life of God has as really come into us as the flesh and blood life of our father and mother, which runs in our veins. He Himself says, "This cup is the *new covenant* in My blood"—the covenant of grace—the promise of the Spirit—the promise of the life of God in us, to enable us to keep and do the will of God as we never could under the law. When we drink that cup, then let us remember that as surely as the glow, and the warmth, and the life of that wine is present in our bodies, so surely is the spiritual life of Jesus Christ dwelling within us. God, with the whole universe from which to choose a dwelling-place for Himself and for His life, chose your body and mine! We have received the life of Christ. Again:—

* * * *

Each man was FILLED WITH LOVE for the other.

When these friends drank of that blood of the covenant, their hearts clave one to another, as did the hearts of Jonathan and David; and from that time they loved one another as none others loved in all that tribe. And as we think of our blood-covenant Friend, what a Lover of our souls was He! How *tender* was His love. We see Him giving over His mother into the hands of the beloved disciples, in the hour of His keenest agony. How *thoughtful* was His love! We see Him providing for the hungry and fainting thou-

sands by preparing the great dinner to meet their needs. By the sea-shore in the morning twilight, as the wearied apostles come from their night's toiling—we see Him making ready the breakfast for them:—Jesus Christ, the Lord of the universe, making breakfast for His own! We see *the compassion* of His love as it went out to the waifs and the strays, the sin-stained and suffering. We see the *unchangeableness* of His love, as we are told that He loved His own “even unto the end:”—unto the end of their coldness;—unto the end of betrayal of Him;—unto the end of denial of Him;—unto the end of all His own agony He loved His own. We see this wondrous love of Jesus Christ, and we too long to possess it. What is the secret of love in our hearts? Listen:—*each man received the life of the other.* Come out with me into the orchard where the fruit-trees are. Do you see the patient husbandman at work? He is cultivating the trees; he is fertilizing them; he is pruning out the dead wood and superfluous branches. You stand there watching him a while, and then you say, “But, my friend, what about the fruit? I do not see any signs of fruit.” And he looks up with a knowing smile—does this wise husbandman—and says, “I am fertilizing for life; I am tilling for life; I am pruning for life; I am cleansing for life. My friend,” and he smiles again, “when this tree is filled with *life*, I will not have any concern about fruit.” Assuredly, *the secret of fulness of love*

is simply the secret of fulness of life—the life of His Spirit dwelling in us. It is life that brings love.—“The fruit of the Spirit is love.” Our dead, carnal natures do not love as God loves. They love the world; they love the ambitions of the world; they love the praises, and baubles, and gewgaws of the world—your carnal heart and mine. But the God-life, the Christ-life in us, that is love—love of others; that is the love we desire to have; and that is the fruit of the Spirit. Wherefore believe in the Spirit’s indwelling; yield to the Spirit; trust in the Spirit; do all that will give the Spirit His way in your life. And as the power and fulness of the Spirit grow in your life, love will grow.

It is a fruit of *the Spirit*, we have said. But do not forget that it is a *fruit*. That means, give it *time*. It takes time for the bud to swell; it takes time for the blossom to open; it takes time for the tiny fruit to form; it takes time for it to round out and develop; it takes time for it to mature, until the beautiful blush is on it, and you break it open and have the peach in all its ripeness and lusciousness. *It takes time*. Be patient with yourself as you wait, and trust, and come to know more and more of the Spirit of God. Then some day you will wake up to realize that there is stealing into your heart a glow of love for the lost, and love for others, and love for the fallen, and love for Christ such as you never knew before. God’s secret of love is simply His secret

of life—the Christ life—the Spirit of God within us.

* * * *

Each friend DID THE WILL of the other.

“Ye are my friends *if ye do whatsoever I command you.*” Each friend stood ready to do that which pleased the other friend, even to the laying down of his life for that friend. Well, can this be true of God, that He does our will? Listen:—“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask *what ye will*, and *it shall be done unto you.*” Behold the marvel and the blessing of the prayer life! God’s wonderful fact that, for the man or the woman who is *abiding in Him*, He stands ready to do *their will*, through prayer. Why should it not be so? When we ask God to do anything according to *His will*, why should He not do it? God is just as pleased to do that part of His will for which *you ask*, as any part of His will in the universe. It is for the honor, and glory, and interest of God to do *your will*, when you are asking according to *His will*. Out there on those great wheat farms in the western prairies is not the owner ready to do the superintendent’s will as well as the superintendent to do the owner’s will? If the harvesting machine gets out of order, and the superintendent asks for its repair, it is to the interest of the owner to repair it. If the grain is mildewed and spoiling, and the superintendent asks for hands to harvest it, it is to

the interest of the owner to answer his request. So when we live in His will, and are striving to do His will, it is to the interest of God's own kingdom that that will be done, and it pleases God to do it. God is just waiting for us to choose His will. And when we choose to do His will, and ask for anything according to it, He will do it. I tell you, the greatest thought about prayer is not that we are praying to God to do something for *us*, but that we are praying to God *to carry out His will* in this world of His. And when we pray that, God stands ready to to carry it out. "Ye shall ask *what ye will* and it *shall be done*." When we say, "Lord, I *will* to separate myself from sin; I *will* to come out from the emptiness and foolishness of the world; I *will* to walk closer with Thee; I *will* to know more of Thy power through communion with Thee, through Thy Word, through separation and service;" when we choose these things which are within the will of God, He is ready to do our will, because He is simply doing His own will in us.

Finally, are we not the friends of Jesus in this sense, *that we do His will*? May we speak of this as the final test as He gives it here, "Ye are My friends *if ye do whatsoever I command you*." That is the supreme test, dear friends;—not how I feel, but *what I am doing*. And Christ says, that if you and I do His will, this is the test of friendship with Him. And what is to do His will? What is obedience? It is *an act*, and it is *a life*.

The act is the surrender to do His will all through our life. Have we done that? *The life* is to carry out the act in every detail of life and to shape and fashion that life not according to our own will but according to the will of God. And if you and I take that step and become His blood-covenant friends, then this Book of His becomes the revelation of His will to us; becomes the test and guide of our life. If we are living to do His will then it matters not how much suffering it means; it matters not what our friends may say; it matters not what the opinions of others may be. We are to ask ourselves, "What does the Word of my Lord say about this decision, about this step, about this indulgence in my life? Whatever it says, by God's grace, I am going to do." That is what friendship with Jesus means—an act by which we give up our lives to do His will, a life in which day by day we steadily, persistently, with the guidance of this Book, fashion our lives according to the will of God.

And will you notice as we close, what Christ declares to be the result? The man, the woman, who does this will—what does Christ say about them? You remember His reply, when those in the crowd that stood near to Jesus said to Him: "Master, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak to Thee," He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples, and said: "Who is My mother and who are My brethren? Behold My mother and My brethren: for *who-*

soever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, the same is *My brother, and sister, and mother.*" He chose the tenderest, the most beautiful relationships on earth, and said, "The man or the woman who has come into this blood-covenant relationship with me—who has given up his or her life to do the will of my Father as I am doing it here upon earth—that man, that woman, is closer to me than my own flesh and blood kindred." Ah, how blessed is the relationship He invites you and me, His children, to enter into with Him to-night! How precious, how dear we are to Him as His *friends!* And thus let us remember that the supreme test of love to our Lord is not our *emotional life*, but simply this: "Ye are My friends *if ye do My will.*" It matters not how prosaic our life is; it matters not how matter-of-fact men and women we are; it matters not that we are not having the wonderful emotional experiences other people may have; it matters not that we are not naturally intense or rapturous, but are quiet, even phlegmatic, in our life characteristics and temperament; if we are daily going about simply doing His will, Jesus Christ says this is the high and supreme test of friendship with Him. Yea, the test of love to Him is to lay down our lives to do His will and then—simply to do it.

The God-Planned Life.

.....“Created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2: 10.

“Created in Christ Jesus.” That means every child of God is a new creation in Christ Jesus. “Unto good works.” And that means every such child of God is created anew in Christ Jesus for a life of service. “Which God hath before ordained.” That means God has laid the plan for this life of service in Christ Jesus, ages before we came into existence. “That we should walk in them.” “Walk” is a practical word. And that means God’s great purpose of service for the lives of His children is not a mere fancy, but a practical reality, to be known and lived out in our present, work-a-day life. Therefore all through this great text runs the one supreme thought that—

* * * *

God has a plan for every life in Christ Jesus.

What a wondrous truth is this! And yet how reasonable a one. Shall the architect draw the plans for his stately palace? Shall the artist sketch the outlines of his masterpiece? Shall

the ship-builder lay down the lines for his colossal ship? And yet shall God have no plan for the immortal soul which He brings into being and puts "in Christ Jesus?" Surely he has. Yea, for every cloud that floats across the summer sky; for every blade of grass that points its tiny spear heavenward; for every dew-drop that gleams in the morning sun; for every beam of light that shoots across the limitless space from sun to earth, God has a purpose and a plan. How much more then, for you who are His own, in Christ Jesus, does God have a perfect, before-prepared life plan. And not only so, but—

* * * *

God has a plan for your life which no other man can fulfil.

"In all the ages of the ages there never has been, and never will be a man, or woman just like me. I am unique. I have no double." That is true. No two leaves, no two jewels, no two stars, no two lives—alike. Every life is a fresh thought from God to the world. There is no man in all the world who can do your work as well as you. And if you do not find, and enter into God's purpose for your life, there will be something missing from the glory that would otherwise have been there. Every jewel gleams with its own radiance. Every flower distils its own fragrance. Every Christian has his own particular bit of Christ's radiance and Christ's

fragrance which God would pass through him to others. Has God given you a particular personality? He has also created a particular circle of individuals who can be reached and touched by that personality as by none other in the wide world. And then he shapes and orders your life so as to bring you into contact with that very circle. Just a hair's breadth of shift in the focus of the telescope, and some man sees a vision of beauty which before had been all confused and befogged. So, too, just that grain of individual and personal variation in your life from every other man's and some one sees Jesus Christ with a clearness and beauty he would discern nowhere else. What a privilege to have one's own Christ in-dwelt personality, however humble! What a joy to know that God will use it, as He uses no other for certain individuals susceptible to it as to no other! In you there is just a bit of change in the angle of the jewel—and lo, some man sees the light! In you there is just a trifle of variation in the mingling of the spices—and, behold, some one becomes conscious of the fragrance of Christ.

* * * *

A man may fail to enter into God's plan for his life.

Among the curiosities of a little fishing village on the great lakes where we were summering

was a pair of captive eagles. They had been captured when but two weeks old, and confined in a large room-like cage. Year after year the eaglets grew, until they were magnificent specimens of their kind, stretching six feet from tip to tip of wings. One summer when we came back for our usual vacation the eagles were missing. Inquiring of the owner as to their disappearance this story came to us. The owner had left the village for a prolonged fishing trip out in the lake. While he was absent some mischievous boys opened the door of the cage, and gave the great birds their liberty. At once they endeavored to escape. But kept in captivity from their earliest eaglet days, they had never learned to fly. They seemed to realize that God had meant them to be more than mere earthlings. After all these weary years the instinct for the sky and the heavens still smoldered in their hearts. And most desperately did they strive to exercise it. They floundered about upon the village green. They struggled, and fell, and beat their wings in piteous effort to rise into the airy freedom of their God-appointed destiny. But all in vain. One of them, essaying to fly across a small stream, fell helpless into the water and had to be rescued from drowning. The other, after a succession of desperate and humiliating failures managed to attain to the lower-most limb of a nearby tree. Thence he was shot to death by the hand of a cruel boy. His mate soon shared

the same hapless fate. And the simple tragedy of their hampered lives came to an end.

Often since has come to us the tragic life-lesson of the imprisoned eagles. God had designed for these kingly birds a noble inheritance of freedom. It was theirs to pierce in royal flight the very eye of the mid-day sun. It was theirs to nest in lofty crags where never foot of man had trod. It was theirs to breast with unwearying pinion the storms and tempests of mid-heaven. A princely heritage indeed was theirs. But the cruelty of man had hopelessly shut them out from it. And instead of the limitless liberty planned for them had come captivity, helplessness, humiliation, and death. Even these birds of the air missed God's great plan for their lives. Much more may the sons of men.

Is not this the very thing of which Paul speaks when he says: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." What are these inner voices which, if we heed not, cease? What are these visions which, if we follow not, fade? What are these yearnings to be all for Christ which, if we embody not in action, die? What are they but the living God working in us to will and to do the lifework which he has planned for us from all eternity? And it is this which you are called upon to "work out." Work it out in love. Work it out in daily, faithful ministry. Work it out as God's works in you.

But more than that. You may miss it. You may fall short of God's perfect plan for your life. Therefore work it out with—fear and trembling! Searching words are these. Words of warning, words of tender admonition. That blessed life of witnessing, serving, and fruit-bearing which God has planned for you in Christ Jesus from all eternity—work it out *with trembling*. Trembling—lest the god of this world blind you to the vision of service which God is ever holding before you. Trembling—lest the low standard of life in fellow-Christians about you lead you to drop yours to a like grovelling level. Trembling—lest some little circle in the dark ends of the earth should fail of the giving, the praying, or the going which God has long since planned for you. Trembling—lest the voices of worldly pleasure and ambition dull and deafen your ears to the one voice which is ever whispering—follow thou Me: follow thou Me.”

* * * *

*One way of missing God's calling may be by
“choosing” our own calling.*

Every day men talk of “choosing” a calling. But is not the phrase a sheer misnomer? For how can a man “choose” a “calling”? If a man is called *he* does not choose. It is the one who calls who does the choosing. “Ye have not chosen *Me*, but *I* have chosen *you* and ordained you that ye should go and bear fruit,” says our

Lord. Men act as though God threw down before them an assortment of plans from which they might choose what pleases them, even as a shop-keeper tosses out a dozen skeins of silk to a lady buyer from which she might select that which strikes her fancy. But it is not true. It is God's to choose. It is ours simply to ascertain and obey. For next in its eternal moment to the salvation of the soul is the guidance of the life of a child of God. And God claims both as His supreme prerogative. The man who trusts God with one, but wrests from Him the other, is making a fatal mistake. Would we were taught this ere our unskilled hand had time to mar the plan! In default of such teaching let us confess with humbled hearts the mistakes we have made here, in the frailty of our mere human judgment. Young friend are you standing in that trying place where men are pressing you to "choose" a calling? Are you about to cast the die of a *self-chosen* life work? Do not cast it. Do not *try* to choose. Does not the text say we are "created *in Christ* unto good works?" If the plan is *in Christ* how will you find it unless you go *to Christ*? Therefore go to God simply, trustfully, prayerfully and ask *Him* to show you what *He* has chosen for you from all eternity. And as you walk in the daily light which He sheds upon your path He will surely lead you into *His* appointed life-plan. So shall you be saved the sorrow, disappointment, and failure

which follow in the wake of him who "chooses" his own path, and, all too late, comes to himself to find out that it pays to trust God in this great concern of his life, even as in all others.

Therefore we must needs admonish one another that a man may miss God's plan for his life. He may miss it by his own blindness, wilfulness, disobedience, or self-choosing. But we pass on now to the more blessed truth, that—

* * * *

*Every child of God can find, and enter into
God's plan for his life.*

You remember the story of the engineer of the Brooklyn bridge. During its building he was injured. For many long months he was shut up in his room. His gifted wife shared his toils, and carried his plans to the workmen. At last the great bridge was completed. Then the invalid architect asked to see it. They put him upon a cot, and carried him to the bridge. They placed him where he could see the magnificent structure in all its beauty. There he lay, in his helplessness, intently scanning the work of his genius. He marked the great cables, the massive piers, the mighty anchorages which fettered it to the earth. His critical eye ran over every beam, every girder, every chord, every rod. He noted every detail carried out precisely as he had dreamed it in his dreams, and wrought it out in his plans and specifications. And then as the joy of achievement

filled his soul, as he saw and realized that it was finished exactly as he had designed it; in an ecstasy of delight he cried out: "It's just like the plan; *it's just like the plan!*"

Some day we shall stand in the glory and looking up into His face, cry out: "O God I thank Thee that thou didst turn me aside from my wilful and perverse way, to Thy loving and perfect one. I thank Thee that Thou didst ever lead me to yield my humble life to Thee. I thank Thee that as I day by day, walked the simple pathway of service, Thou didst let me gather up one by one the golden threads of Thy great purpose for my life. I thank Thee, as, like a tiny trail creeping its way up some great mountain side, that pathway of life has gone on in darkness and light, storm and shadow, weakness and tears, failures and falterings. Thou hast at last brought me to its destined end. And now that I see my finished life, no longer 'through a glass darkly' but in the face to face splendor of Thine own glory, I thank Thee, O God, I thank Thee that, it's just like the plan; *it's just like the plan!*"

Then, too, while we do need to walk carefully and earnestly that we miss not God's great will for us, yet let us not be anxious lest, because we are so human, so frail, so fallible, we may make some mistakes in the details and specifications of that plan. For we will do well to remember this. God has a beautiful way of overruling mistakes when the heart is right with

Him. That is the supreme essential. The one attitude of ours which can mar his purpose of love for our lives is the refusal to yield that life and will to His own great will of love for it. But when that life is honestly yielded, then the mistakes in the pathway which spring from our own human infirmities and fallibleness will be sweetly and blessedly corrected by God, as we move along that path. It is like guiding a ship. Our trembling hand upon the wheel may cause trifling wanderings from her course. But they seem greater to us than they are in reality. And if we but hold our craft steadily to the pole-star of God's will, as best we know it, she will reach her destined port with certainty, notwithstanding the swervings that have befallen her in the progress of her voyage.

* * * *

But now we come face to face with a question of supreme importance. And that is this: "How shall I ascertain God's plan for my life? How shall I be safe-guarded from error? How shall I discern the guidance of God from the misguidance of my own fleshly desires and ambitions? How shall I find the path in which He is calling me to walk? We answer, first:

* * * *

Believe.

The trouble with most of us is that we do not believe God has such a life-plan for us. We

take our own way, we lay our own plans, we choose our own profession, we decide upon our own business without taking God into account at all. "According to our faith is it unto us." And if we have no faith in God's word in this regard, what else can we expect but to miss God's way for our lives, and only come back to it after long and costly wanderings from His blessed, chosen pathway for us? Ephesians 2:10, is as surely inspired as Ephesians 2:8. The promise of a life-plan is as explicit in the one, as the promise of salvation is in the other. Brood over this Ephesian verse. Is it plain? Is it God's word? Does it not say clearly that God has a life-plan for you in Christ Jesus? Then settle down upon it. Believe it with all your whole soul. Do not be shaken from it. Again—

* * * *

Pray .

Dr. Henry Foster, founder of the Clifton Springs sanitarium, was a man of marvelous power with God. A man, too, of great insight into the mind and ways of God in the matter of guidance in the affairs of life. What was the secret of that wondrous power and wisdom? Visitors were wont to ask this question of one of the older physicians on the staff of that great institution. And this was his response. He took the visitor by the arm. He led him up-stairs to the door of Dr. Foster's office. He led him into

this little chamber, across the corner of the room. There, kneeling, he lifted up the border of a rug and showed to the visitor two ragged holes in the carpet, worn there by the knees of God's saint in his life of prayer. "That, sir, was the secret of Henry Foster's power and wisdom in the things of God and men."

Friend, when your bed-room carpet begins to wear out after that fashion, the man who lives in that room need not have any fear about missing God's life plan. For that is the open secret of wisdom, and guidance in the life of every man who knows anything about walking with God. "Does any man lack wisdom? Let him *ask* of God." Are you one of the men who lack wisdom concerning God's plan for their lives? Then ask of God. Pray! Pray trustfully, pray steadily, pray expectantly, and God will certainly guide you into that blessed place where you will be as sure you are in His chosen pathway, as you are of your salvation.

* * * *

Will.

Will what? Will to do God's will for your life, instead of your own. Do not launch out upon the sea of life headed for a port of your own choosing, guided by a chart of your own draughting, driven by the power of your own selfish pleasures or ambitions. Come to God. Yield your life to Him by one act of trustful,

irrevocable surrender. And then begin to choose and to do His will for your life instead of your own. So shall you come steadily to know and see God's will for that life. Our Lord Jesus clearly says this: "If any man *will* to do *my* will *he* shall *know*." Without a shadow of doubt, we will begin to know God's will, as soon as we begin to choose His will for our lives instead of our own.

Thus the spiritual field-glasses through which we come to see God's will for our lives are double-barreled. Side by side are two lenses. The one—"I trust." The other—"I will." When a man can hold both of these to his eyes he will see God's will with unclouded clearness. But suppose a man says to God "I doubt." Then a veil falls over that lens of faith. And suppose he says, "I will not." Then the veil falls over the other, the lens of the will, of choice. Straightway that man's spiritual vision is in eclipse. He walks in a darkness of his own making, springing from his own unfaith and self-will, yet the source and cause of which he, in his blindness, wholly fails to perceive.

Friend, are you walking in such darkness? Do you say, "there is such a veil between you and the will of God for your life? Listen. Begin to *believe* in God's plan for your life. That veil will become translucent. Begin to *will* to do God's will. That veil will become transparent. Begin day by day, actually to *do* God's will. That veil will vanish! And when it is gone, and

you are walking in the full light of God's will for your life you will see that it was self-will alone which shut out the clear vision of God's will. For no man can see the will of God save through these two crystal lenses—the trustful heart, and the yielded will.

Does some one say at this point: "But suppose I have given my life to God to enter into His will for it. What change shall I make in it? Shall I seek a new environment, a new sphere? What shall I do? We answer—

* * * *

Stay where you are, and do the next thing.

Talk God's plan, and consecration to it, to Christian men and straightway many of them think you mean them to give up their business and head at once for the pulpit or the foreign missionary field. To come into God's life-plan is to go into some other *place*, as they view it. But there never was a greater mistake. Consecration is not necessarily *dis*-location. Not by any means. God's plan for a man's life does not of necessity lift him out from his present realm of life and surroundings. It is not a new sphere God is seeking. It is a new man in the present sphere! It is not transference. It is transformation. The trouble is not usually with the place. It is with the man in the place. And when a man consecrates his life to God to find

and enter into God's perfect plan for that life, God will *usually* keep him right where he is, but living for God and His kingdom instead of living for self. So, until God shows you differently, stay where you are, and live for God.

* * * *

If God wants you elsewhere He will lead you there; be sure to follow.

We have seen that consecration is not necessarily dis-location. Yet it *may* be. That God usually keeps a man where he is, when he yields his life to Him. Yet *not always*. God may lift you clear out from the sphere in which you are moving. God may completely change your environment, as well as change you. God may take you out of your business or profession, and send you to the uttermost parts of the earth as a chosen messenger of His. "But how will this come about," do you say? *As you do the next thing.* For God's plan for your life will not burst from the heavens in one splendid panoramic vision of his purpose for it. Rather it comes day by day to the man who faithfully does the thing next at hand. God's searchlight falls upon only one bend in the river at a time. Round that and you will have light upon the next. The golden chain of God's great purpose for your life and mine is woven of the single links which we lay hold of, one at a time, along the pathway of daily opportunity. By and

by, when we have gathered enough links, the chain begins to appear. The man who faithfully picks up the links need never fear about missing the chain. Therefore do the next thing. As you do it then this thread of daily service becomes in God's hands, like the clew to a maze. By it God leads you on and on in your pathway until you are out from all the labyrinth of darkness and uncertainty, into the clear shining of His will for your life. Therefore do the next thing patiently, faithfully, lovingly. Teach the class, visit the sick, comfort the sorrowing, preach the Word, use the tract and leaflet, witness for Him just where you are. And as you thus serve if God wants you elsewhere he will surely lead you there. Only do you *be sure to follow*. And thus following some of us will land in China, India, Africa. And some of us will abide just where we are. But all of us will be where He wants us. And that is, in the plan.

“Ah,” says some one, “this is all very well for the young, and the strong who have all of life before them. But it is too late for me. My life has been full of blunders and failures. It is only after years of wandering that I have come to Christ. There is naught left for me but the memory of mistakes, and the fragments of a vanished and broken life.” Listen, friend, to this truth, as we part to-night:

God is the only one who can take a seemingly shattered life and make a beautiful life from the fragments.

¶Have you ever heard this story? In a certain old town was a great cathedral. And in that cathedral was a wondrous stained glass window. Its fame had gone abroad over the land. From miles around people pilgrimaged to gaze upon the splendor of this masterpiece of art. One day there came a great storm. The violence of the tempest forced in the window, and it crashed to the marble floor, shattered into a hundred pieces. Great was the grief of the people at the catastrophe which had suddenly bereft the town of its proudest work of art. They gathered up the fragments, huddled them in a box, and carried them to the cellar of the church. One day there came along a stranger, and craved permission to see the beautiful window. They told him of its fate. He asked what they had done with the fragments. And they took him to the vault and showed him the broken morsels of glass. "Would you mind giving these to me?" said the stranger. "Take them along," was the reply, "they are no longer of any use to us." And the visitor carefully lifted the box and carried it away in his arms. Weeks passed by; then one day there came an invitation to the custodians of the cathedral. It was from a famous artist, noted for his master-skill in glass-craft.

It summoned them to his study to inspect a stained glass window, the work of his genius. Ushering them into his studio he stood them before a great veil of canvass. At the touch of his hand upon a cord the canvass dropped. And there before their astonished gaze shone a stained glass window surpassing in beauty all their eyes had ever beheld. As they gazed entranced upon its rich tints, wondrous pattern, and cunning workmanship, the artist turned and said: "This window I have wrought from the fragments of your shattered one, and it is now ready to be replaced." Once more a great window shed its beauteous light into the dim aisles of the old cathedral. But the splendor of the new far surpassed the glory of the old, and the fame of its strange fashioning filled the land.

Reader, do you say that your plans have been crushed? Thank God and take heart. Have you not long since learned that the best place for many of your plans is the trash pile? And that often you must fling them there before your blinded eyes can see God's own, better plan for your life? And how is it with your life? Has sin blighted it? Have the mistakes of early years seemingly wrecked it? Have joy and sweetness vanished from it? Does there seem nought left for you but to walk its weary treadmill until its days of darkness and drudgery shall end? Then know this. Jesus Christ is a matchless life-mender. *Try Him.* He will take that

seemingly shattered life and fashion a far more beautiful one from its fragments than you yourself could ever have wrought from the whole. In Him your weary soul shall find its longed-for rest. And the fragments that remain of God's heritage of life to you shall mean in gladsome days to come, more than all the vanished years that are crooning their sad lament in your innermost soul to-night.

* * * *

Why do I drift on a pathless sea,
 With neither compass, nor star, nor chart,
 When, as I drift, God's own plan for me,
 Waits at the door of my slow-trusting heart?

Down from the heavens it drops like a scroll,
 Each day a bit will my Lord unroll,
 Each day a mite of the veil will uplift;
 Why should I stray? Why falter and drift?

Drifting—when God's at the helm to steer;
 Drifting—when God lays the course so clear;
 Drifting—when straight into port I might sail;
 Drifting—when heaven lies just within hail.

Help me, my God, in *the plan* to believe;
 Help me my fragment each day to receive,
 Oh, that my will may with Thine have no strife!
 For the God-yielded will finds the God-planned life.

Believing is Seeing.

"Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" (Jno. 11:40.)

The world says seeing is believing. Jesus Christ says believing is seeing. The world's maxim is familiar enough. The man who sees believes. We come into knowledge through the channel of vision. We know the sky, the stars, the clouds, the sea, because we see them with our very eyes. Yet just as real, and quite as simple, is the truth that the man who believes shall see. Faith ever issues into vision. The man who trusts shall know. The believer becomes a seer. And note first here, that—

* * * *

The faith which takes God's word shall see.

We remember one year in our boyhood when the Christmas tide had come. Some one must needs play Santa Claus for the children, and the lot fell upon us. Our stripling figure was filled out to the proper Santa Claus rotundness by a convenient cushion. Our pockets were stuffed to the full with the various gifts of love. And we went about the ministry of distribution.

From one to another the packets were passed until, as we thought, all had been parcelled out. Then came a request from one of the family circle: "Put your hand in your right pocket. There is something there for you." But we shook our head skeptically. Did not we know all the gifts that had been stowed in those pockets? And did not we know there was nothing else there? But again came the word of request. And still we shook our head in decided negative. At last more urgently, "Well, put your hand in the pocket, and try. Believe and you will see." And then, to satisfy a loved one, the hand was slipped into the designated pocket. And, lo, out came a parcel, marked with our own name. Within was a beautiful gold watch, the gift of a loving father to his boy. It had been slipped into the pocket all unknown to us. If we had not believed we never would have seen. But when we believed we saw. When we believed—came realization. When we believed—came the joy of possession.

Unsaved friend, it is right here that you are making a fatal mistake, a mistake which will work your eternal undoing. You say you will not believe until you see. You must have some experience of Christ before you will believe in Christ. But know this. You will have a definite experience of Christ just as soon as you exercise a definite faith in Christ. And you will never have it before. When you believe the

light will come. When you believe the peace, the joy, the assurance will come. Like Paul you will "know whom you have believed." But that means you will never know until you believe. Believing will surely bring you to seeing. *But all the seeing in the world will never bring you to believing. Have a definite transaction with Jesus Christ.* Definitely accept Him as your Saviour. Definitely confess Him before men as such. And as surely as you do this you will *definitely* know *the salvation* of God in Christ.

Believe and you shall see.

* * * *

The faith which prays shall see.

You have been praying for showers of blessing, and not even a drop has fallen. You have been praying for some barrier to melt away, and it seems to have grown even greater. You have been crying to God for a flood of light upon your darkened path, and not a single gleam has yet shone. Do not lose heart. Do not faint by the way. For the faith which prays shall see. Petition shall end in vision. The cry of intercession shall give place to the song of thanksgiving.

A young man left a New England city to go as a missionary. Time passed. One night his pastor in the homeland was awakened in the dead of night beset with the fear that his young parishioner was in peril. A great burden of prayer was rolled upon him. He arose and gave

himself for hours to earnest intercession for the safety of his friend. At that very time this was happening in the heart of Africa: The missionary, accompanied by a native, had started out to hunt. As they journeyed they ran upon two lions and a lioness. The missionary fired, killing one of the lions, and wounding the other. The lioness seemingly fled. In fact she had only hidden in the jungle. The missionary now advanced and fired again upon the wounded lion. The rifle had scarcely cracked when the great brute lioness leaped upon him from her ambush. With one blow she struck him to the ground. In an instant her teeth were sunk in his arm and her claws tearing fiercely at his shoulder. He cried out to the native to shoot, but the latter could not, as the missionary was between him and the lioness. In his panic, however, the native fired his rifle in the air. At once the lioness looked up. She dropped the missionary from her jaws. He rolled over into the bottom of a shallow ditch. And then instead of leaping upon him and finishing her work, the lioness turned and trotted into the jungle. The bleeding missionary was helped into camp. There, after six weeks, he recovered completely from an experience which it is given to but few men to pass through. God had indeed "stopped the mouths of lions" for him. The tidings of his wonderful escape went back home to his faithful pastor. And he who had *prayed* now *saw*. He saw the

peril which had menaced his friend. He *saw* why God had aroused him at midnight to pray. He *saw* the miraculous deliverance which had come to pass. Because he prayed, and prayed in faith, he saw the glory of God in wondrous answer. And so may you—if you pray likewise.

Abraham prayed and saw God meet his petition again and again for wicked Sodom and Gomorrah. Moses prayed and saw God answer for disobedient Israel. Hezekiah prayed and saw the utter rout of the Syrian host. Jesus prayed and the wondering people saw Lazarus break forth from the gloom of the grave. The church prayed and Peter saw the glory of the Lord and the opening gates of prison cell and ward.

Wherefore though no man's—hand—cloud of promise has yet risen upon your horizon—pray, and you shall see. Though as yet no drops from the coming down-pour fall upon your upturned face of intercession—pray and you shall see. Though the granite barrier against which you are hurling your prayer of faith has not budged one hair's breadth—pray, and you shall see. Though the stubborn heart for which you cry unto God in the dark hours of the night does not seem to abate one atom of its hardness—pray, and you shall see. For the faith which prays, and *prays*, and **PRAYS**, shall surely see. The prayer which is in the will of God shall surely see the glory of God.

The faith which yields shall see.

God is not satisfied with taking your spirit into heaven. He wants to use your life here upon earth. And so you have come to another step of faith—the faith which *yields*. You have come face to face with a decision which, next to acceptance of Christ as your Saviour, is the most momentous a man can ever make—the decision to consecrate your life to God. And you shrink back. You are sore afraid. You do not *see* all that consecration means. You do not *see* how God can make use of your modest talents. You do not *see* how He can adjust your straitened and hedged pathway to a life of devotion to His will. To all this God has but one answer. *Believe* and you shall *see*. For in your life you will see the glory of God whenever, as best you know, you place that life in the will of God.

Here is a plain strip of canvass. Before it stands the master painter. He says, “Do you see that golden sunset? Trust yourself to me and I will paint its glory in your face.” And the canvass says, “I am coarse in texture. I am scant in size. I do not see how you can fill me with the glory of that sunset sky.” And the master says, “*Yield*, and you shall *see*.”

Here is a black mass of ore, fresh-dug from the grime of the earth. It is soiled, stained, and mis-shapen. The master workman takes it in his hand. “There is naught in me for you.”

says the ore. And the goldsmith says, "I will take you, and melt you, and mold, and carve, and chase you, until there shall be wrought from your blackness a precious cup of gold fit to grace the feast-day of a king." "*Yield* and you shall *see*."

And here is a plain, every-day life—*your* life, my friend. And the Master stands before it, and speaks, "Give me your life. It matters not how humble it is, give it to me. And I will chasten it, and enrich it, and anoint it with my Spirit, and glorify My Father in heaven through it." And you are saying, "I do not *see* all that consecration means. I do not *see* any niche of Christian service into which I can fit." And to all this the Master of our lives has still the same answer, "*Yield*—and you shall *see*."

A man stepped up to us one day at the close of a meeting, and said, "I want to tell you a story. Years ago I was teaching a class of boys in a certain city. There were eight boys in the class. It was in the days before the lesson helps were so plentiful as now, and we were confined to the use of the Bible alone. There was but one Bible for the whole class. This was passed from hand to hand in due order. I noticed especially how the second boy in the class acted when the book reached him in turn. He fumbled at the leaves. He hesitated and halted at words of but ordinary difficulty. The big words he skipped entirely. Yet he was most faithful

and persistent in it all. My brother," said the speaker, "that boy was Dwight L. Moody."

Dwight Moody might have deemed his talents too modest for God to use. He might have thought it useless to yield them to Him. He might have decided to lay them up in the napkin. But he did nothing of the kind. He yielded his all to God, as it was. He trusted. He followed on. And the world has not yet ceased to see the glory of God in his wondrous life.

And so shall it be with you. Never mind how feeble your efforts, how frequent your failures. Never mind that you cannot see how or where God can use so humble a life as yours. Never mind that it seems so fettered by circumstances that God can surely never free it and use it. That is for *Him*, not for you. Keep off God's ground. It is for you simply to yield. God will take care of the rest. And as you *believe* enough to *yield* you will surely *see* the glory of God.

* * * *

The faith which waits shall see.

The helpless *must* wait. The patient *do* wait. But the strong, and the eager—how hard it is for them to wait! To wait for the salvation of a soul when your heart is breaking with the suspense; to wait for the consecration of a life while you see the world laying waste its preciousness; to wait for laborers to be thrust forth while the harvest is whitening in death; to wait for

God to bring things to pass and see Satan's ravages while you wait; such waiting takes a mighty faith. And yet faith which waits shall surely see. The glory of God comes to the waiting one.

You have been taking a long and wearisome railroad journey. For days you have been traveling through the dust and heat. You are nearing home, and brook with impatience each delay. At midnight you are awakened by the slowing of your train. It bumps, jars, and creaks, and finally comes to a standstill. You wait, and wait. You peer out into the gloom with your face pressed against the car window. Five, ten, twenty minutes pass. Still all is quiet, with no sign of a move. You drum at the window pane. You turn wearily in your berth. You wonder when the weary wait will end. Presently there is a sound in the distance. The rattle and clatter come nearer. Then there is a rush, a roar, the red glare of a great fiery eye and the monster engine and its trail of coaches sweeps by you in an instant and is swallowed up in the encircling darkness. You have *waited* long. Now you *see*. You see in vision the awful death which would have come to you had you gone on. You see the wise forethought which kept you waiting on that track. It was a passing siding and the one safe thing to do was to wait. Had you gone on it would have been to the wreckage and death of a collision.

And so perchance it is with yourself. Is your

heart in the mission field and your body at home? Are you eager for the Master's service, yet hindered on every side? Is the horizon of life so narrowed by circumstances as to become almost unbearable? Yet God's waiting time is best for you. Wait—and you will see your barriers razed. Wait—and you will see your circumstances change. Wait—and you will see God bringing things to pass beyond all your dreams. Wait and you shall see. For "*He worketh for him that waits for Him.*"

* * * *

The faith which does not understand—shall see.

Mary and Martha could not understand what their Lord was doing. Both of them said to Him, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Back of it all we seem to read their thought, "Lord, we do not understand why you have stayed away so long. We do not understand how you could let death come to the man whom you loved. We do not understand how you could let sorrow and suffering ravage our lives when your presence might have stayed it all. Why did you not come? It is too late now. For already he has been dead these four days." And to it all Jesus had but one great truth. "You may not understand; but I tell you if you *believe*, you will *see*."

Abraham could not understand why God should ask the sacrifice of his boy. But he trust-

ed. And he *saw* the glory of God in his restoration to his love. Moses could not understand why God should keep him forty years in the wilderness. But he trusted. And he *saw* when God called him to lead forth Israel from bondage. Joseph could not understand the cruelty of his brethren, the false witness of a perfidious woman, and the long years of an unjust imprisonment. But he trusted. And he *saw* at last the glory of God in it all. Jacob could not understand the strange providence which permitted that same Joseph to be torn from his father's love. But he too *saw* the glory of God when he looked into the face of that same Joseph as the viceroy of a great king, and the preserver of his own life and the lives of a great nation.

And so perhaps it is in your life. You say, "I do not understand why God let my dear one be taken. I do not understand why affliction has been permitted to smite me. I do not understand the devious paths by which God is leading me. I do not understand why plans and purposes that seemed good to my eyes should be baffled. I do not understand why blessings I so much need are so long delayed, and sometimes never come at all. There are so many things in God's dealings with me I cannot understand." Friend, you do not *have* to understand all God's way with you. God does not expect you to understand them. You do not expect *your* child to understand, only believe. And

some day you will *see* the glory of God in the things you do not understand. For we walk by faith, and not by sight. And the glory comes from believing, not from understanding. Remember this :

The things we do not understand are all working together for good to them that trust. (Rom. 8:28.)

You go into a great silk mill. Running the length of the room is a massive steel shaft. It is whirling away, hundreds of revolutions per minute. All the wheels upon it are running in the same direction with it. But across the room are a score of other smaller shafts, called "counter shafts." They are all linked to the great main shaft. But they are all running in exactly the opposite direction. You look up to your friend who is guiding you through the great mill, and say, "I do not understand these counter-shafts. They all seem to be running the wrong way, opposite to the great main shaft. They must surely all be defeating the purpose of the owner of the mill." "Ah," says your friend, "you are mistaken about that. Just follow me, and you will see." And you will follow him down the long aisles into the weaving room. And there you see the busy looms, driven by these very counter-shafts, turning out yard after yard of the rich, lustrous silk for the making of which this great mill is being run. You see that the very counter-shafts which seemed to be working *against* the main shaft are

in reality all *working together with that* shaft to carry out the purpose of the mill-owner in turning out the beautiful silken fabric.

Child of God, all things are not *good*. Nor does God say *that*. For sin is not good. And sorrow is not good. Nor is suffering good, in itself. But "all things *work together* for good." And God *does* say *that*. And the things you do not understand, the things which seem to be all working against you, all these are really working together to turn out from God's workshop His one perfect, finished product—a man or woman conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. And concerning these "all things" come Christ's sweet words to us, as to them of old, "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst *believe* thou shouldst *see* the glory of God?"

Whate'er is best for me, my God will bring to me,
If I do only wait, and trust, and pray,
Whate'er seems dark to me, shall end in light for me;
'Tis but the gloaming which fore-runs the day,

The Spirit-Filled Life.

(Jno. 7: 38-39.)

“He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.”

“But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.”

If, some summer day, you were tramping down a certain mountain pass, you would, by-and-by, come to one of the most famous of Swiss glaciers. In the perpendicular wall of that great glacier, summer sun and warm winds have hollowed out a great ice cavern. You enter the arch and, as you stand in the fantastic cave, you are chilled through with its cold. Ice above you; ice before you; ice all about you;—masses of ice; miles of ice. And now, as you gaze, there springs up at your feet a crystal stream of water from the very heart of the glacier, and begins its journey down the valley. You could almost step across it where it finds its birth. But, like the true Christian life, as it goes it grows, and a few miles down the valley, it is a strong, deep, leaping stream. The birds dip their bills into it, and, drinking, lift their heads to God as if in thanksgiving. The trees slip their roots down the bank

and draw up its moisture. The lowing herds sink their nostrils in its pools and drink of its refreshing. By and by it enters a great lake, and seems lost. But it finds issue, and crossing central France, it takes a sudden turn and runs southward, and then, at its mouth, broad enough for fishermen to draw their seines, and for great ships to sail upon its bosom, it is at last lost in Europe's greatest inland sea. And this beautiful, sparkling river, with all its refreshing and blessing, springs from the frozen heart of a great Swiss glacier!

Have you ever looked up into the Lord's face and cried, "O, Christ, how cold my heart is! How cold when I study Thy blessed Book with all its wondrous words of life; how callous it seems in the sacred chamber of secret prayer; how icy as I look with such seeming unconcern upon the sin and suffering of the lost world; how frozen in its lack of love for the Christless millions of heathendom! O Christ, is there anything that will melt this ice-berg heart of mine, and cause a river of love and peace and power to flow forth from it to the world about me?" And Jesus Christ says, "There is. I have it." The God who can cause a river of refreshing to break forth from the frigid heart of an Alpine glacier can make a river of life burst forth from your cold heart. Are you a believer? Then listen. "Out of *your*"—do you heed it?—"out of *your* innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."

Let us be glad that Christ has made this truth so plain. Metaphors and similes are often hard to explain. One man has one interpretation, another man a different one. But here there is no chance for wrangling or disputings; none for difference of interpretation. The Holy Spirit interprets this passage Himself. For the Word of God says of this beautiful figure, "This spake He of *the Spirit* which they that believe on Him should receive." There is no room for doubt about it. God is talking of a river of spiritual blessing; of the river of His own life that He means shall flow from the heart and life of every child of His. And no power in earth has a right to cheat us of that blessed river of life. It is our birthright, and no man can keep us out of it if we fulfil the simple conditions Christ gives.

* * * *

This river of life is the NORMAL LIFE of the Christian.

We recall a glorious morning drive under the sky of a southern spring day. The world seemed intoxicated with life. The tree-roots were sucking life from the earth in which they were hid. The trunks were passing it upward to the branches. The branches were pouring it forth to the very tips of the swelling buds. The seeds buried in the ground were quickening with life. The day was humming with the drone and buzz of

insect life. The very air you breathed made the pulsing blood to leap and thrill with life. And the thought was borne home with power, "If God's normal plan for His physical world is one of such abounding, over-flowing life, why should it not be the same for the spiritual life of His own children?" "Ah," you say, "but this river of the Spirit is the exceptional life. It is beyond the ordinary. It is not the normal life of the believer of to-day." Are we sure of that? What *is* the believer's normal life? Is the *usual* life of the Christian the normal life God has designed for him? Or, does it not rather reveal the shame of his shortcoming of it?

To know naught of the power of God; to live a barren, fruitless life in the kingdom of God; to have made light in the service of God: to be so allied with the world as hardly to be known as the children of God—is *this* the normal life of God's child? Nay, never. It may be the usual life—alas for that!—but it is never the normal life. It may be the one we are living. But it is an awful sag from the one Christ means us to live.

Would you look upon a picture of the normal life? Here it is. Mark it well. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: and great grace was upon them all: and all that believed were together: and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat

their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved." Lives filled with grace and joy, love and unity, testimony and power, and favor both with men and God—these were the normal lives in those glad days. Yea, and God means these to be the normal lives yet. Verily, this life is not the exception in God's plan. It is the type. It is the worldly, powerless, fruitless Christian life which is abnormal, that is, away from the normal. The Spirit-filled life is God's own pattern in the mount: God's own perfect model for our lives. For God never has designed and never will endure any substitute for the individual, consecrated, Spirit-filled life, and any church which falls short of this high ideal will miss its high calling however pretentious its claims, however elaborate its organization.

* * * *

This river of life is IN us who BELIEVE.

A belated ship had come in from sea. Her water barrels were exhausted. Her crew were perishing with thirst. By and by they sighted another vessel, and the cry went up from the perishing men, "Send us water; send us water." Back from the captain of the other ship came the strange reply:—"Throw over your pails and draw." "But we want not this salt water to madden our thirst. We are famishing for life-giving

water." Back again came the same strange reply:—"Throw over your pails and draw." Once again with parched lips and burning throats, the now desperate crew called for water. And then came back the answer:—"You are in the mouth of the Amazon. Throw over your pails and draw." And, sure enough, all unknown to themselves, they had sailed into the mouth of the Amazon, which is, at mid-river, so wide as to be out of sight of land. And, all the while they were thirsting, perishing, and crying for water, the sweet, fresh water of that great river was all about them, and they needed only to draw, to drink, and find life.

Just so are men and women crying out to God for the Holy Spirit to come: pleading for a baptism of the Holy Spirit; waiting to receive the Holy Spirit. Yet, all the while, the Holy Spirit is here. For this river of life, this Spirit of the living God, becomes the possession of every one of His children upon belief in Jesus Christ for salvation. If there were no other test to prove this than Christ's own word here that would seem to be all-sufficient. How clear and explicit it is. "*He that believeth* out of *his* innermost being shall flow." "But this spake he of the Spirit which *they that believe* on Him should receive." No other condition named, none other needed, but this simple one of faith in Him for salvation. The faith which trusts Him then for salvation: and then the faith which presses on to give the

life to Him in dedication: which commits all things to His keeping: which draws day by day upon Him for His resurrection life: which constantly leans upon and lives upon Him for all things:—it is this faith alone which the fuller, more complete, and more all-sweeping it becomes, brings to the child of God an ever-increasing, ever-enriching knowledge of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Of like import is our Lord's word to His disciples in the fourteenth of John. There He tells them that the Father will send them "another Comforter." "For He dwelleth *with* you and shall be *in* you." That word "another" is significant. There are two words for it in the Greek. One means another of a different kind. The second means another of the same kind. Interestingly enough, our English word "another" contains this double meaning. For example: You go into a hardware store to buy a pen-knife. You select one seemingly perfect. But when you come to use it you find it otherwise. The edge is dull. The steel is brittle and worthless. The first strain you put upon the blade it snaps in two. You go back to the merchant and say: "This knife does not please me at all. I want another." You mean another of a different kind. But, now suppose when you buy your second knife you find it just right. The blade is keen as a razor. The steel is of the finest quality. The handle is of a beautiful pearl. You are delighted with

your purchase. You think of a friend to whom you would like to give one like it. So you go back again to the merchant and say—"I am delighted with this knife. Please give me another." And, now you mean another of the *same kind*, exactly like the one you have just bought.

When the Lord Jesus was going away from His own and said "The Father will send you another Comforter," He used the Greek word which means "another of the same kind." That is, the very same as Himself. "The very same life you have seen flowing from Me; the very same the Father sent down from Heaven with Me; the very same by which He has done His wondrous works through Me; that very same Holy Spirit shall be in you, even as He was not in the Old Testament saints. He was *with* them; but he shall be *in* you." And so with all reverence, yet with all joy and gladness of heart may we say that the very same Holy Spirit who dwelt in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is dwelling in us, God's children. Let us believe upon His word, that He is so indwelling in all of us who are believers in Him, and just waiting for a chance to live out His life in all its fullness through us.

And so we pass naturally to our next thought, that

This river of life will FILL us as we YIELD.

The stream of life and power from God runs along the river-bed of the will of God. Where-

fore the man or woman who is most fully in the will of God must most fully know the life and fullness of God. The one Man who had the Spirit "without measure" was He who at the beginning said to God, "Lo, I came to do Thy will." In other words, self-will is a dyke; the yielded will is a channel. The dyke of self-will keeps out the fulness of God's life. But the channel of the yielded will furnishes an avenue for its outflow. Why does the harp breathe forth its ravishing strains under the hand of the master-harper? Because it is *yielded* to him. Why is the molten bronze filled with every outline of the beauty of the mould? Because it is *yielded* to it. Why does the great ship plough her way through storm and surge to her destined haven? Because she is *yielded* to the will and touch of the helmsman. If the harp, and the bronze, and the ship each had a will of its own it could hinder the master's highest purpose for it. You *do* have such a will. And you *can* resist God. Therefore you must needs yield the life to Him, if so be that He may fill it. And that fuller life will come. It may not be in a flash. It may come by degrees. But as you yield your life by one definite act, and then, day by day, learn to live out that act in a life of yieldedness and ministry, God's river of life will surely and steadily manifest itself from your innermost being.

This river of life will FLOW FORTH FROM US as we SERVE.

That was a sweet prayer of a young Christian girl—"Lord, fill me to overflowing. I cannot hold much. But I can overflow a great deal." And she was right. For with many the desire concerning the Holy Spirit is to hold, and to enjoy. Whereas with God it is to give, and to overflow to others. For we see the Spirit of God here pictured as a great, life-giving river. But every river needs an outlet. When it has none it ceases to be a river, and becomes only a stagnant pool. The river of the Spirit is subject to the same great river-law. It seeks an outlet for the divine outflow of life and love in everyday, practical ministry to others. It begins its flow as soon as it finds a channel. And it keeps it up so long as we remain such. Jesus does not say "*In his innermost being shall stay*" but "*out from his innermost being shall flow*" these living streams. That is the one purpose for which rivers exist—to flow. Cut off their outlet and you stop the flow.

Here is an open secret for us all. The man or woman who will offer the Spirit-river this simple outlet of humble, willing service will know His steady over-flow. People plunge the probe of self-examination into their inner selves, seeking all sorts of inward, subjective causes for their failure of spiritual life and experience. Ordinarily

the reason for that failure is amazingly simple, and near at hand. Is the life selfish, and self-centered? Is it failing in daily, practical ministry to others? And would you know the remedy? It is this. Do not try to shut up the Spirit in a stagnant pool of selfishness. Let Him have His river-way of flow through outlet—the outlet of loving, practical service to others. Try this. Then all your spiritual moods and morbidness will disappear in the daily, joyful consciousness of His steady outflow through the channel of service.

There comes to mind a dear railroad friend, a conductor on a freight train. Not a man of learning as the world counts learning. But he knew God. There came to him a time when the battle was on over the consecration of his life to God. Coming from his train one night long after midnight he fought out this battle in the woods on a hill back of his home town. There in the darkness he gave his life to God. From that time the river of life flowed with increasing power and abundance from the railroad man's innermost being. One day he was taking his train to a distant city. In the train was a stock-car containing a valuable race horse, on its way to the city races. In charge of the horse was a special care-taker. By and by, for some cause, the train was sidetracked and held in waiting. As the wait grew more tedious this man grew very angry. He began to stride up and down the track, fiercely

cursing and blaspheming. The Christian conductor bore it as long as he could. Then walking up to the godless blasphemer, he put his hand upon the latter's shoulder and said, gently, "My friend, I wish you would cease taking that Name in vain. It is the most precious Name in the world to me, and it grieves me to hear it blasphemed." As he talked on in this strain of the Man who had died for him, to redeem him from death and sin, a great change came over the blasphemer. He ceased cursing. Evidently he was profoundly moved by the words of the Christian railroad man. Presently he turned to him and said—"Conductor, I have a goodly sum of money on my person. I had made all my plans to spend it when I reached the city. I was going to pass the night in sin and debauchery. But your words have touched me. I have changed my mind. As soon as I reach that city and have put away my horse I shall turn straight home to my wife and children. And by the grace of God I shall hereafter be a different man."

Out from the innermost being of our railroad friend the river of life was flowing, touching and quickening another life as it flowed. And why? Because he was yielded to it, and was willing to let it have its way of service. Is there anything to hinder the same in us? Nothing—if we but offer it the same yieldingness, the same willingness for humble, every-day, unselfish service.

This river of life may flow forth from us UNCONSCIOUSLY.

I was in a great city, teaching. A difficult question of guidance had arisen. Day after day I had prayed about it. But the perplexity seemed only to increase. At last I came to the danger point of anxiety, so earnestly had light been sought and found not. And then this happened. One morning before the dawn I suddenly awakened from sleep. The first consciousness that came in the darkness was that a heavy wagon was rumbling past the window, in the street outside. The next was that some one on the wagon—presumably its driver—was whistling a tune. And the next vivid impression was of the tune he was whistling. It was

“Then we’ll trust and obey:
For there’s no other way,
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.”

Like a flash out from the darkness, came the thought as from the Lord, “Why, my child, this is all I expect of you. Simply act upon the light as best you see it, and trust Me to lead you. There is nothing you need but to trust and obey.” At once I saw I had been unduly anxious about the guidance, and that this was the exact message I needed in this time of perplexity and uncertainty. Light flooded my pathway. Perplexity made way for peace. The problem was solved. The rumble

of the dray wheels died away in the distance. The song of the whistler ceased. But a message had gone straight home to my heart more wondrous than any sermon ever heard. I do not know whether the unseen whistler was a child of God. But I believe it. And out from his innermost being was flowing that river of life which brought into the life of another child of God such a touch of life, and light, and refreshing as he who passed on into the darkness never knew or dreamed.

“O Lord,” said one of His saints, “I thank Thee that Thou hast forgotten all the sins I remember, yet dost remember all the good deeds, I have forgotten.” That is true. And out from our lives, all unconscious to us, may flow a stream of influence and blessing of which we may in no wise be conscious. But he does not forget it. And it shall all be revealed in the day of manifestation to our unspeakable joy, and His eternal glory.

“This learned I from the shadow of a tree,
Where to and fro swayed on a garden wall
Our shadow-selves, our influence, may fall
Where we can never be.”

* * * *

“And he shewed me a pure *river of water of life* * * * proceeding out of *the throne of God.*” Rev. 22: 1.

“This Jesus * * * having *received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost* * * * *hath shed forth this which ye now see.*” Acts 2: 32-33.

Wonderful river of life! It proceedeth from the very throne of the Father. It was received by the Son from the Father. It is shed forth by the Son upon us other children of the Father. And now as we believe—and yield—and serve, it will abide—fill—and flow forth from us to the sinning, suffering, dying world here below which so sorely needs the touch of His divine life through us, His Spirit-indwelt children.

Jacob's Struggle.

(Gen. 32: 24-32.)

There are four or five great truths that stand out in this story of Jacob as the lofty peaks of a mountain chain rise above the range of which they form a part. The first is,

* * * *

There was GREAT SELFISHNESS.

We have no evidence that Jacob's life during the years just prior to this was one marred by any heinous sin. We do not know that it had broken out into gross forms of self-indulgence, which brought any special judgment of God upon him. But it seems to have been like the lives of many other children of God: a life which was simply lived for self; a life such as the world about us lives, and from which world we do not seem to be very different as we ourselves live it. "Well," we say, "if there was nothing more to smirch Jacob's life than mere selfishness, that does not seem to be much." But that was enough. When you recall what this name Jacob means you will realize what selfishness means in the life of a child of God. He was called "Supplanter." And the Holy Spirit could scarcely have chosen a word

that would more clearly express what selfishness does than this—that the self-life is the *supplanter* of the Christ-life. Is it not enough that selfishness supplants the *power* of God? The man who lives a purely selfish life has no power in prayer; no power in testimony; no power in work for the unsaved; no power for God in the community about him.

Is it not enough that selfishness supplants the *peace* of God? For the fret and care of trying to serve two masters—of being called by God's name and yet trying to live in God's world just as the worldling is living—this gives a man no peace. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God," said Augustine, "and our souls are restless till they rest in Thee." And until a child of God's life rests in God and in God alone, he will not find that peace of God which God wants to give.

Is it not enough that selfishness supplants the *love* of God? For the two cannot co-exist. God is utterly unselfish. God is love—love of others. And when we live a life that is purely a life for self, the love of God cannot fill our hearts, and flow through those hearts to others.

Is it not enough that selfishness supplants the *purpose* of God? The selfish man sits in his cushioned pew and worships God in his way. But to enter into the purpose of Christ for a lost world; to share the agony of Christ for lost souls; to join in the intercession of Christ for the giv-

ing of the Gospel to this dark world; to become a partner in the purposes of God—that never enters into the life of selfishness. Is it not enough that selfishness should supplant the life of God in this way?

Moreover God has set His stamp upon selfishness as the supreme foe of Himself. There are three deadly enemies of God: the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are in the world, but God tells us not to be *of* it. We may resist the devil, and he will flee from us. But we must renounce the self within, if God is to have the complete victory in our lives. Over the door of the Inferno one saw: "All ye who enter here abandon hope." Over the portal of Christian discipleship is written: "All ye who enter *here* abandon self." Some one has well said: "There is a cross and a throne in every heart. We may put Christ on the throne and self on the cross. Or we may put self on the throne, and Christ on the cross." Selfishness is indeed the supplanter of God in the soul. God always dwelt in the tabernacle in His shekinah glory and presence. Yet there was a veil that hid Him from those who entered there with Him. So God is always dwelling in the heart of His child, but the veil that darkens, and mars, and limits the manifestation of His presence is the veil of the flesh—the self-life within us. Wherefore when God, who is absolute and utter unselfishness, meets a child of His, like Jacob, given up to selfishness, there can be but

one issue. God enters into controversy with that life of selfishness. And thus, next:—

* * * *

There was A GREAT STRUGGLE.

For as we read on in the narrative we find that

God was striving with Jacob.

“God striveth,” the margin of the Revision puts it. We do not read it so. But God does. Listen: “And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man (the God-man) with *him* (Jacob) until the breaking of the day. And when He (the God-man) saw that He prevailed not *against him* (Jacob) He touched the hollow of his (Jacob’s) thigh: and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint.” This is God’s story. How clear it is! There was a man wrestling *against* Jacob all the long night. And Jacob’s wrestling was a resistive wrestling. It was not Jacob wrestling with God for a blessing. It was God wrestling with Jacob to break down and put away from his life the things that were hindering the ever present and ever gracious purpose of God to bless His child with the greatest possible measure of blessing. How much more consistent with the nature and love of God is this! A love which is more eager and willing to bless His children than they themselves are to be blessed. “God striveth.” How this God of grace strives with the sinner! How he strives with that un-

ceasing inner voice of the Spirit in the soul! How He strives in the tender entreaties of loved ones. How He strives in all the vicissitudes of life, death, suffering, affliction, and the like! Tenderly, patiently, lovingly through all the long, rebellious, weary years of rejection does God strive to win the soul of the sinner from death to life. But let it be noted that in this instance

God was striving not for a soul, but for a life.

For a man may be a child of God, yet not a dedicated one. He may give up his sins, yet not himself. His soul may be saved, but his life unyielded to God. Jacob was such a child of God. He had been saved long ere this. God was not striving for his soul. He was striving for his life. He was striving to win him away from a past which had been lived for self, to a future which should be lived for God and His glory.

If you turn to the margin of James 4:5 you will find a beautiful rendering which reads like this: "That Spirit which He made to dwell within us yearneth for us with jealous envy." What a picture of the Holy Spirit dwelling within God's child! Like a wife who, when she sees her husband giving his affections to any other than herself to whom they solely belong, feels her heart go out in jealous, wifely envy for those affections. Or like a mother who, when she sees her boy giving up his life to reckless, out-breaking sin,

burns with earnest, jealous longing for that life that is yielded to evil-doing. Just so, when the Holy Spirit comes into one who has been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, who has been redeemed as a precious possession for God Himself, and then sees such a life going out toward the world, toward its frivolity, its foolishness; that self-same Holy Spirit is filled with godly, jealous yearning for that life. There is a godly, jealous envy for the years which the world is stealing away while He yearns to redeem them; for the talents which are being wasted while He is yearning to use them in His kingdom; for the soul which the world is staining and marring while He is yearning to conform it to the glorious image of His Son. And hence the mighty striving of the Spirit for His own.

That is exactly what occurs in your life and in my life. How often has the Holy Spirit yearned for us, pleading with us to give that life to Him, to turn away from the world, to turn away from its emptiness, to give ourselves as a burnt-offering to God, that Jesus Christ may have His own blessed way with the life He has bought with His own precious blood. That is God's picture of this struggle—a God of love struggling to break down in His child's life the thing that was hindering Him from having His full and perfect way of blessing, and power, and ministry through that child. And we need only look within to see that this carnal mind—this self-life—is the su-

preme foe struggling against God, to hinder and baffle the mighty purpose of God in our lives.

God's child was resisting.

That was what Jacob was doing. All the night long he was fighting a desperate battle against God. There was no gleam of spear, no clash of sword, no hissing of dart. But the fiercest fight of Jacob's life was on and on to death. We can almost hear his hard, quick breathing. We can almost see the set teeth; the straining, writhing body of the wrestler; the desperate countenance fixed in its purpose of resistance. With every atom of power and persistence within him, Jacob was resisting God—the God who wanted to bless him! And so do we. God strives to wrest from our hands the poison draught of pleasure which the world puts to our lips, and we resist Him. God tries to overthrow some secret idol that we are worshipping, and we resist Him. God would take from our grasp some edged tool of Satan behind whose glitter death lurks for us, and we resist Him. God takes us by the hand to lead us away, in love, from the snares and pitfalls which the lusts of the flesh spread for our unwary feet, and we resist Him. And then as we battle against the Spirit of God there comes into our lives the next crisis which came into Jacob's at this point.

There was a GREAT BREAKDOWN.

“He touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh: and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint.” Jacob broke down under the hand of the mighty wrestler. We said to a physician friend one day, as we were chatting about this:—“Doctor, what is the exact significance of God’s touching Jacob upon the sinew of his thigh?” He replied: “The sinew of the thigh is the strongest in the human body. A horse could scarcely tear away the limb, pulling it straight. Only as he twisted it could he tear it apart.” Ah, I see, God has to break us down at the strongest part of our self-life before He can have His own way of blessing with us.

We talk about surrender. We talk about surrendering *all*. But when it comes to the core of the matter, “all” usually means some one supreme point of issue between us and God; some one strong citadel in which the self-life is entrenched; some one key point which God must carry by assault before He can have His way with us. That great thigh sinew—like the trunk on which a tree stands as the storms assail it—like the column on which a great house stays its massiveness; that great sinew straining all night against God—bringing to bear all the resistive power of the wrestler against God—God touched that and broke him down. Just so does God deal with us. That pride—God touches, and breaks it down until the self-life is humbled in the dust. That

money the Christian business man is piling up until covetousness is eating into his heart like a canker—God touches it, and it takes wings and flies away. That idol which self is worshipping—God touches it, and like Dagon, hurls it to the ground, maimed and mutilated. That strength in which self revels—God lays His finger upon it and withers it, and self is brought to helplessness. Ah, we do not know how to deal with the self-life. But God does. And He takes away the thing upon which it feeds, and robs it of the power upon which it depends, and cuts away the props upon which it stands, until it lies in helplessness at His feet.

Here is a Christian business man. He has been redeemed. His mouth is full of praise and joyful testimony at the first. But he goes out into the world. He begins to live just as the worldly man lives. It is all gaining and no giving; it is all hoarding, and no spending and being spent for God. It is all for self and none for God. He keeps on in this path. And bye-and-bye his lips are sealed in the testimony meeting. You hear no voice of prayer from him. His conscious communion with God is broken. Bye-and-bye coldness steals into his heart and he becomes a powerless man. And then some day a strange thing happens. Something comes along and sweeps away the wealth. Some idol is touched and it withers. Perhaps the strength is laid low; perhaps sickness befalls. The fur-

nace and the crucible are put to work. And people wonder why that man's life is in such a place of affliction. But God does not wonder. God knows what He is doing; what He is permitting. And when that man, prostrate and broken, is brought to the end of himself in helplessness, you will see a new thing. Into that man's life come transformation, power, blessing, and a new and living walk with God, all because God has broken him down at the point of his self-life that was holding him for self and the world. God has to rob some men of about all they have, before He can get them for Himself. As long as it is God *and something*, we cling to the something. But when it becomes God *or nothing*, then we turn to God because there is nothing else left. There are some lives that turn to Him simply and sweetly in fullness of devotion from the beginning. There are other lives which God has to deal with as He dealt with Jacob. Often, what we will not yield God has to take; what we will not give up God has to break up. A godly woman used to say: "God has not only pulled me up by the roots, but He seems to be shaking the dirt off the roots." "Take me, break me, make me," seems to be the prayer some of us have to pray, before God has His perfect way with us.

There was a GREAT VICTORY.

It was the victory of love—the love that will not let us go. How gladly would Jacob have broken away from that mighty grasp. How quickly would he have fled away into the darkness and the night if he could. But the unseen wrestler would not let him go until He had conquered him—*because He loved him.* A kind-hearted surgeon is pressing the keen knife into the cancer, which is eating out our life. He holds our struggling hand with steady grasp. He will not let us go, however much we are suffering. We look up into his face and cry out, “I suffer; let me go.” But He says, “I will not let you go until I have my way of blessing with you. I will not let you go—because I love you.” Another loving hand is pressing a bitter potion to our lips. We cry again, “I do not like it; let me go.” A loving voice answers: “A deadly poison is burning in your veins. This is the antidote for it. I will not let you go—because I love you.” Even so do we look up to God and cry: “Why do you keep me in this fiery furnace! Why do you let these heavy burdens oppress me? Why do you suffer me to be so sorely and constantly tested and tried? Why do you not relieve me? Why do you not let me go?” And the voice comes to us “I will not let you go until I have won you for Myself. I will not let you go until I have purged you of your dross. I will not let you go until

I have humbled and crushed to the earth the self-life, which is the deadliest foe to My life and power within you. I will not let you go because I love you, and am seeking to win you from that which is empty, hollow, and unsatisfying, to that which is full, and rich, and blessed in Christ Jesus."

* * * *

There was great POWER IN PRAYER.

But had not Jacob prayed all night? Not he. He had *striven* all night; and *against* God. But it was only when the thigh-collapsing touch of God came that Jacob clung and prayed, and was victorious. For the birth-place of prayer is helplessness. Prayer comes to its own; enters into its lawful heritage of mighty power only with men who have reached the end of themselves and are clinging to God. Power in prayer did not come to Jacob while he strove in his own strength, but when he clung in his own helplessness. What poor humans are we, that God must needs let us be driven into the stress of necessity and helplessness because in no other way can he constrain us to betake ourselves to prayer to Him! Yet it is even so. Do we pray when the wind is a-beam, the skies fair, and our ship running free before the breeze? Nay, but when the mast is overboard, the rudder gone, and the ship in the trough—then we pray. Do we pray when our loved ones are in prosperity, health, and strength?

Nay, but when the sober-faced physician shakes his head, and says he has done all he can, and death's shadow settles down over the chamber of a precious one—then we pray. Strength is self-reliant and thinks it needs no God. But weakness is driven to God-reliance and there learns the secrets of the prayer life. Helplessness begets dependence—dependence leads to prayer: and prayer brings power. Out of our own insufficiency into God's sufficiency, by the pathway of prayer, is the secret of power. Wherefore self-strength may be worse than weakness. For the weak man learns to cling and pray. But the strong one stays self-centred and misses God.

Faith.

"For ye are all sons of God THROUGH FAITH in Christ Jesus."—Gal. 3: 26.

The Word of God does not much concern itself with definitions of faith. But it is often illustrating and picturing faith. And none of its pictures is simpler or more beautifully clear than that one in Heb. 12: 2.—"*Looking unto Jesus.*"

* * * *

Faith is looking UNTO JESUS.

Exactly what is it to look unto Jesus with the faith that saves the soul? Let us illustrate. You owe a thousand dollars. You give your creditor a note for it. That note is endorsed by a rich friend. Suppose it to be in the days when imprisonment for debt is in force. By and by you become bankrupt. Not one dollar do you have to meet your obligation. As the day approaches upon which your note falls due your creditor begins to harass you. He exacts every dollar. He threatens you with imprisonment if you fail to pay. Straightway your heart is filled with anxious care. You cannot possibly pay the debt. As the hour draws near your distress of soul grows almost unbearable as you think of the suffering of your loved ones whom you have unwittingly

involved in your fate. But now you remember that you have a kind friend as endorser on your note. You go to him in your crisis. At once he says—"My friend, do not worry one moment longer, I am your endorser on this note. I have ample assets to meet it. *Just look to me to pay it.*"

At once your whole attitude changes. You leave off worrying. Peace fills your heart. Another man has taken the whole burden. And thus it is lifted entirely from you. You have ceased to try. You simply trust. *That is, you are looking to another*, and to him alone to pay your debt. Hold before your mind this thought of a man *looking to* his endorser to pay his note. Hold it there not for one moment, but for several. Hold it until you have a sharp, clear picture of what your attitude of mind would be if you were thus depending upon a friend to pay your note. Do you grasp it clearly? *Can you think it through?* Can you put yourself exactly in that place? Have you held it there now until there is no blur nor fog to the mental picture of *just how you would look to an endorser to pay your note?* Well, *that is faith.*

* * * *

Faith is DEPENDING.

Surely. That is exactly what looking to another means. That is precisely what the maker

of the note does toward his endorser. It is relying upon another. It is counting upon him. It is throwing your weight upon him, and his word. It is *depending* upon him to do the very thing he has promised. You wish to send your little child down street in the city. A friend offers to take her in charge. You give her into his keeping, saying, "I *look to* you to take care of my child." You simply mean that you *depend* upon him to do it. You break a limb by accident. Your friend the surgeon comes to set it. You say, "Doctor, I *look to* you to set that limb aright." You are about to take a journey. You take your seat in the train. You say to the conductor, "Friend, I *look to* you to bring me to my destination." In all these cases where you are looking to others you mean that you are *depending* upon them. You are *counting upon* them to do the thing in question, and are making no effort whatever to do it yourself. This is exactly what looking to Jesus for salvation is. He is a specialist in saving men. That is His business and His alone. "*He* shall save his people from their sins." Therefore you are to *look to* Him, *count upon* Him, *depend* upon Him to save your soul just as simply, helplessly, and absolutely as you, a bankrupt debtor, would depend upon your rich endorser to pay your note. And when a man passes from this *looking at* Jesus as a historical personage, to this dependent *looking to* Jesus to save his soul, he passes from

the faith of the devils who believe and tremble, to the faith of God's sons who believe and *are saved*.

* * * *

Faith is LOOKING AWAY from everything else unto Jesus.

The word "looking unto" has a meaning which is not expressed in our own version of the Bible. It means not only looking unto but "looking away." "Off-looking unto Jesus," is the rendering in Luther's translation. The man who is looking *unto* one thing or person, must look *away* from everything else. When you trust another to guide you on a dark night you look *away* from your own knowledge of the way unto his. When you put yourself under the instruction of a great teacher you look *away* from your own ignorance unto his wisdom. When in weakness you lean upon the strong arm of a friend you look *away* from your own helplessness unto his strength. So when you look to Jesus for salvation you must needs look to Him alone. You look away from your own merits, away from your own efforts and strugglings, away from your own self-righteousness—unto Jesus. Especially is it true that:—

* * * *

Faith is looking away from your own WORKS—unto JESUS.

It is Jesus who saves. And faith is looking unto Him for salvation. Therefore we do need

to steadily look away from our own works—unto Jesus. Nothing in the Word of God is clearer than this. “We reckon therefore that a man is justified by *faith*, *apart* from the works of the law.” (Rom. 3:28, R. V.) “But to *him that worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith* is counted for righteousness.” (Rom. 4:5.) “The blessedness of the man unto whom God reckoneth righteousness *apart from works.*” (Rom. 4:6, R. V.)

And why does God lay such stress upon our looking away from works unto Jesus in order to be saved? Simply because the state of the lost soul is such that good works utterly fall short of meeting that soul's supreme need. For consider a moment these two great facts concerning the unsaved soul.

The unsaved man *has a sin-stained past.*

The unsaved man *is condemned to death.*

How wholly insufficient are good works to meet this dual need of the soul. Will a good deed wash away guilt? Can acts of charity cleanse the blood-stained past? Can works of mercy purge a conscience crimsoned with sin? Can *anything* a man may *do* or *be* atone for sin? Nay, “without shedding of blood there is *no remission of sins.*” Jesus is our only sin bearer. Jesus alone is the purger of the soul from guilt. We must look away from works unto *Him* alone. And so too of the sentence of death upon every lost soul because of sin. “The soul

that sinneth it shall die." Can any good deed lift a soul out from under the awful shadow of its sentence of death? Though we give our bodies to be burned, will *that* do it? Though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, will that do it? Will a genial disposition, or a kind heart, or a loving ministry to the suffering and needy, will these do it? Nay. A lofty purpose, a moral life, a kind heart, can never lift that condemnation from the guilty soul. But Jesus can lift it. For He Himself has suffered the death sentence. He has suffered it in our place. And he who believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ "shall not come into condemnation but *is* passed from death unto life." (Jno. 5:24.) Again:—

* * * *

*Faith is looking away from YOUR OWN FAITH—
unto Jesus.*

Some people try to have faith in their own faith, instead of faith in Jesus Christ. They keep looking for a subjective condition. They ought to be looking to an objective Christ. True faith pays no attention whatever to itself. It centers all its gaze upon Christ. For *faith* is not our savior. Faith is simply an *attitude* of the soul, through which *Jesus* saves. When Satan cannot beguile us in any other way he gets us to scrutinizing our faith, instead of looking unto Christ. That man has the strongest heart who is the least conscious of its existence. And that

faith is the strongest which pays no attention to itself. You may weaken the heart by centering your anxious attention upon it. So nothing will quicker weaken faith than the constant endeavor to discover it. It is like the child's digging up of seed to see if it is growing. It is a curiosity which brings disaster to the seed. It is not a man's faith, but his *faith in Christ* which saves him. To be looking unto Christ *is* faith. To be looking unto anything else, even unto faith, is a trouble to the soul.

And is not this the deep and real significance of our Lord's comparison of faith with the mustard seed? When He tells us of the power that would come to us if we "have faith as a grain of mustard seed," what does he mean? Surely not that we are to have only a little faith. For He always rebukes "little faith." But rather He is saying this: "Hold or *regard* your faith *as* you regard, and look upon the grain of mustard seed." And how is that? Why does Christ choose so trifling a symbol of faith as the mustard seed? Because He is contrasting *faith* and *God*. The emphasis of His teaching here is not on the "have faith," but on "have faith *in God*." He is not turning our eyes toward faith. He is turning our faith toward God. And so nothing but the tiniest and most insignificant of seeds could symbolize the utter littleness, yea nothingness of faith, as compared with the omnipotent God who works through our faith. But how

else is faith like the mustard seed? Plainly in this. That each, however insignificant in itself, is the channel of life *through which flows the life of God*. The wonder of faith, and the wonder of the mustard seed is the same. It is that though nothing in themselves God can, and does, *work through them*.

Therefore do not worry about your faith. Do not always be scanning it. Look away from it altogether—unto Jesus. For faith alone is naught. It is only faith *in Jesus* that counts. Take care that you are depending upon Jesus to save. And faith will take care of itself.

* * * *

Faith is not CLINGING—*it is* LETTING GO.

Somewhere we have read a story like this. A traveler upon a lonely road was set upon by bandits and robbed him of his all. They then led him into the depths of the forest. There, in the darkness, they tied a rope to the limb of a great tree, and bade him catch hold of the end of it. Swinging him out into the blackness of surrounding space, they told him he was hanging over the brink of a giddy precipice. The moment he let go he would be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. And then they left him. His soul was filled with horror at the awful doom impending. He clutched despairingly the end of the swaying rope. But each dreadful moment only made his fate more sure. His strength

steadily failed. At last he could hold on no longer. The end had come. His clenched fingers relaxed their convulsive grip. He fell—*six inches*—to the solid earth at his feet! It was only a ruse of the robbers to gain time in escaping. And when he let go it was not to death, but to the safety which had been waiting him through all his time of terror.

Friend, clutching will not save you. It is only Satan's trick to keep you from *being* saved. And all the while is your heart not full of fear? *Let go! That* is God's plan to save you. "And will I not fall to death?" you say. Nay. Underneath is—*Jesus!* He is the Rock of your salvation. And when in sheer helplessness you let go, and fall upon Him fear goes, and death goes, and safety comes forever. For *He*—not your clinging, but—*He* shall save *His* people from their sins."

* * * *

Faith is not TRYING—it is CEASING.

A drowning boy was struggling in the water. On shore stood his mother in an agony of fright and grief. By her side stood a strong man seemingly indifferent to the boy's fate. Again and again did the suffering mother appeal to him to save her boy. But he made no move. By and by the desperate struggles of the boy began to abate. He was losing strength. Presently he arose to the surface, weak and helpless. At once

the strong man leaped into the stream and brought the boy in safety to the shore. "Why did you not save my boy sooner?" cried the now grateful mother. "Madam, I could not save your boy so long as he struggled. He would have dragged us both to certain death. But when he grew weak, and ceased to struggle, then it was easy to save him."

To struggle to save ourselves is simply to hinder Christ from saving us. To come to the place of faith we must pass from the place of effort to the place of accepted helplessness. Our very efforts to save ourselves turn us aside from that attitude of helpless dependence upon Christ which is the one attitude we need to take in order that *He* may save us. It is only when we "cease from our own works" and depend thus helplessly upon Him that we realize how perfectly able He is to save without any aid from us.

* * * *

Faith is not DOING—it is RESTING.

When work is ended then comes rest. So is it with the work of redemption. Jesus has finished that work. He has borne our sins. He has died in our place. Therefore on Calvary He cried out, "It is finished." And it is ours now to rest, for the work is done. "Rest in the Lord," is the word for us. But what does a man *do* when he rests? He does not *do* anything.

He *quits* doing. He throws his weary body on a chair, a couch, a bed, and *lets* that hold him. He ceases all trying to hold himself. And so what do you do when you rest in Christ for salvation? You do not do anything. You throw yourself, your weight, on Christ and let *Him* do. You simply—*rest*. For while you are trying you are not resting. And when you begin to rest, you cease trying. Wherefore “we which have believed do enter into *rest*.” And the man who believes in Christ does indeed *rest* in Him for the salvation of his soul.

* * * *

Faith is not FEELING—it is taking God's word.

In a gospel meeting a penitent woman was seeking salvation. The evangelist quoted to her anxious soul those precious words of Isaiah 53: 6, “*The Lord hath laid on Him (Christ) the iniquity of us all.*” He showed her that though she was a sinner and had gone astray like a lost sheep, yet God's word clearly stated that all her sins had been laid upon Jesus Christ. “The Lord” had done this apart from any feeling or emotion of hers. All she need do was to take God's word and depend upon Christ for this remission of sin. She seemingly did so, and went home rejoicing. The next morning she came downstairs with tears in her eyes. The old burden of anxiety for sins had come back. Her little boy, who had been with

her in the meeting the night before, noticed her grief. "Mamma, what is troubling you?" "Oh, last night I *felt* I was saved. But this morning it all seems like a dream. I fear I am deceived." "Mamma," said the little lad, "get your Bible and turn to Isaiah 53:6." And she did so, and read "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "Mamma, *is the verse still there?*" "Yes, my son." "Then your sins are *still on Jesus,*" said the wise lad. The mother saw the truth. She took God's word, without regard to her feelings. And then God's peace came to stay.

Friend, your salvation rests not upon your changeable feelings, but upon God's unchangeable fact. The fact of God is that Christ has borne your sins, and has died in your place. No feeling of yours, whether of joy or grief, exultation or despondency, peace or distress, can possibly affect that great fact. Therefore let not one fragment of your faith hinge upon your own moods, or emotions. But let it rest implicitly in God's word. For in that it will find perfect peace. And it will find it in that alone.

* * * *

..The day you turn your face from sin to God: the day you look away from your own works, your own feelings, even your own faith—unto Jesus: the day you cease clinging, struggling and trying: the day you see that faith is simply depending upon Jesus as a bankrupt debtor depends

upon his endorser: the day you begin to so depend upon and confess Christ as your Savior: that day God will save your soul, and through that self-same simple faith will make you—A SON OF GOD.

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