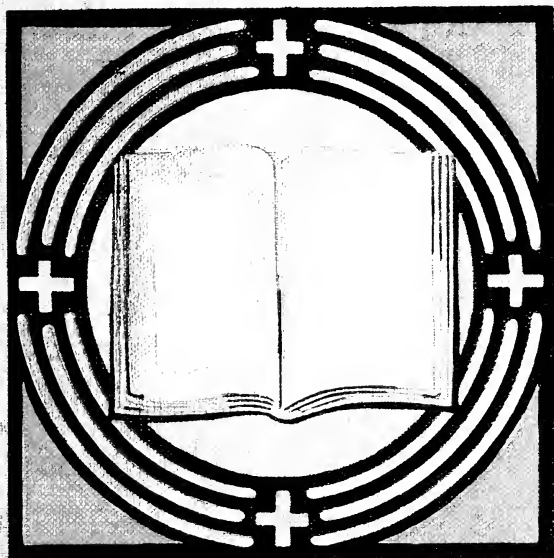


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The Night
Evangel
by Louis Albert Banks



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Banks

THE SUNDAY-NIGHT EVANGEL

The Sunday-Night Evangel

A Series of Sunday Evening Discourses delivered in Independence Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, Kansas City, Missouri

BY

The Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.

Author of "Christ and His Friends," "The World's Childhood," "The Problems of Youth," Etc.



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
VISIONS	1
THE SOUL'S HEARTHSTONE	15
THE WHEELS OF PROVIDENCE	30
THE RAINBOW ABOUT THE THRONE	43
A MAN ON HIS FEET	58
A MAN ALONE WITH GOD	71
THE WEAK SPOT IN A MAN'S ARMOR	86
A CHAIN OF INFLUENCE	98
THE MAN WHO WAS LEFT	109
THE PERILS OF THE CITY	120
THE MAN WITH FOUR FACES	135
THE TRAVELER'S SANCTUARY	150
THE WALLS OF CHARACTER	165
CUSHIONS—GOOD AND BAD	178
THE SOUL'S SATISFACTION	189
THE UNSEEN FACTOR IN A HUMAN LIFE	202
THE MASQUERADE OF LIFE	219
THE LIFE THAT IS WORTH LIVING	234
THE MIRACLE OF TURNING A MAN INTO ANOTHER MAN	250

39 X 688 1

	PAGE
CHRIST AND THE WORLD'S LEAVINGS	267
THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY IN SOULS	283
THE SOUL'S IMPERATIVES	299
A STUDY IN PALMISTRY	311
THE SECRET OF A TOWERING PERSONALITY	327
THE WAVES OF TIME	343
THE SWEETENING OF THE HEART	354
GOD'S REWARD FOR LOVE	374
THE PORTER AT THE GATE OF SOULS	393
THE GENTLENESS OF GOD	408
THE GOLDEN CHURCH	424

THE SUNDAY-NIGHT EVANGEL

VISIONS

“I saw visions.”—Ezekiel 1 : 1.

THE distinguished French divine, Theodore Monod, says that one of the most sensationally sad things in its impression upon him that he ever beheld was on one occasion when, passing through one of the most splendid and glorious views in the Alps, he saw by the wayside a woman sitting with a deprest and gloomy face, bearing on her breast a piece of pasteboard with the words, “A blind woman.” He had been enjoying the glorious views to the utmost and it went through his soul like a piercing dart that for this woman there were no rocks or mountains; no white mist and brightness of the immaculate snow; no clouds driving through the sky; no sun, no moon, no day, no night.

We do not know how to thank God enough

for the vision that comes to us through our eyes. We are obliged to use material language in speaking of spiritual things. There is not one of the senses of the body which we do not appeal to as an illustration of what takes place in the soul. We speak, for instance, of taking hold of God, or of bowing under the hand of God. That is the sense of touch between God and ourselves. Or we speak of tasting. The Psalmist says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." And there is a passage in Isaiah which appeals to the sense of smell. It says, "He shall have the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord," and that the Spirit of the Lord "shall make him of quick understanding"; but the marginal reference says "of good scent" in the fear of the Lord—that is, the man who renders himself submissive to the Spirit of God shall have a scent like a hound after spiritual things. As the keen-scented deer-hound tracks his prey unerringly where others catch no guidance, so the man who surrenders himself to God to do His will, shall follow the scent of the divine trail amid all the mazes of life.

Some one suggests an interesting conception of how it might have pleased God to have made our bodies differently, and to have endowed us with four senses instead of five. Suppose it had been thought sufficient that we should be able to see and hear, to feel and taste, but were denied the sense of smell; and yet God, denying us this, had filled the world with odorous buds and fragrant trees, as now. Then the fragrance of the lily would have been in vain, the perfume of the violet unreal, and all the sweet scent of the roses nonexistent. But suppose God had, presently, let it be imagined, repented, and had given to one solitary man the sense of smell; and this man, forgetting the deprivation of the others, should come to us with his question, "Can you tell me why there should be so great a difference between the fragrance of the violet and that of the rose?" We would say to him, "My dear sir, we do not understand you; the shape of the flowers and their size and color we can speak of, but what this fragrance is, we are unable to understand." And should he go on to speak such words as smell, odor, and scent, we could only insist on

our denial. And it is precisely in the same way that visions of God are rare or impossible to some men and so frequent with others. A man is not necessarily beside himself because he sees what others say is not there, or hears a voice when all the world declares there was no sound. For take the supposition we have been discussing and suppose a cure were worked on us, and for the first time we should walk out into the flower-garden with the sense of smell. With what wonder we should become aware of their odors, and go from flower to flower to try them all! The more a man grows sordid and selfish, and devoted to earthly things, the more he needs the added sense for spiritual vision. When a man is wholly given up to business, a woman altogether immersed in frivolity, the day of seeing visions of God is gone. I have had many a man in my church and congregation, concerning whom I have been moved to pray the prayer that Elisha prayed for his young secretary, when he cried aloud unto God at Dothan, "Open the young man's eyes, that he may see." It is this spiritual vision which we are to study. And I wish to call your

attention to some visions which in one way or another have come or will come to every one of us on the journey of life, and our lives in their result will depend upon how we treat these visions.

I

First, there are the visions of youth, full of hope and courage concerning our own life. Joseph saw visions like that. He saw visions in which all the sheaves in the field and all the stars in the sky bowed down before his earnest and triumphant career. It is suggestive of the visions of noble life and achievement that come to every true-minded young man or young woman. Oh! those blessed visions of youth. A good, strong man who has worked hard against odds and succeeded said to me the other day: "There is nothing that I have seen in the Bible concerning visions and dreams that I have not realized myself in my youth, when I have been forced to be out at night under the clear sky, watching the stars. Wonderful things were given me to see in those young days." And the same thing has happened to other men under other circum-

stances. Abraham Lincoln saw his visions in the Illinois backwoods, and tracing the career of any great souls you will find that success and triumph have been won by obedience to these early visions. Saul, a brilliant young lawyer, full of passionate bigotry and egotism, was persecuting the Christians to the very death when, on his road to Damascus at the noon-day, there came that vision of light which transformed the whole world for that man. It lifted him out of selfishness. It lifted him up into fellowship with Jesus Christ. It put upon his shoulders the burden of the world's salvation. Under those burdens and in that fellowship there was developed a manhood that will stand forever in the gallery of the immortals.

Some of you are dreaming dreams and seeing visions which God is giving you concerning a noble manhood which is possible for you. What are you going to do with your visions? Happy indeed will you be if, after a while, when your hair whitens and your eyes look into the sunset, you will be able to say with Paul, "I have not been disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

II

Ever and anon God sends to men visions which awaken their consciences. These are seasons of spiritual illumination, moments of intellectual and spiritual insight, during which a man obtains deeper knowledge of the mysteries of life than in years of ordinary activity. Some one says that life is conditioned by death more than by length of days. The current of history is often changed in a day. The geography of a continent has been sometimes determined by the achievements of an hour. And when God opens the heavens, as he did to Ezekiel, and grants a man "Visions of God," the man is often transformed in a moment. The young Isaiah caught such a vision of God and it gave him a sudden illumination of his own heart. He had been living complacently enough until then; but when he saw the holiness and glory of God, it showed the black spots on his own soul, and he cried out, "I am unclean." But the result of that vision of his sin and God's holiness led to the cleansing of his heart and to a beautiful and glorious career. There is

an incident in the life of Peter much like that. One day when Peter was on a fishing-trip with his Master he caught a sudden glimpse of the godlike holiness of the character of Jesus Christ, and feeling his own unworthiness and sin, he cried out in the anguish of his soul, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." But Peter, too, under the influence of such visions, came after a while to his day of Pentecost. Are there not some who hear me who need just such visions as these? You have been comparing yourself with some poor, half-discouraged neighbor who is a church-member, and have felt very self-complacent about it. I pray God to give you a vision of Himself; to show you a glimpse of the holiness of Christ, that in the blaze of that white, pure light, you may see the ugly blackness of your own selfishness and sin.

On one occasion Elijah had fled away in cowardice and fear and God appeared to him at the mountain-cave and said to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Oh, my friends, there are some of you that were reared in Christian homes and taught to pray to God

at your mother's knee, who are now living without prayer and without hope in God. I would that God would come to you as He did to Elijah in that cave on the slopes of Mount Horeb and send His ringing question quivering like an arrow into the depths of your soul to-night—"What doest thou here?" With all the Bible-reading and Sunday-school teaching of your childhood, with all the loving prayers that sheltered your youth, what doest thou here in indifference and sin?

III

Then there are visions of mercy and forgiveness. Jacob had such a vision. He had deceived his father and cheated his brother, and was on the way into exile in punishment. Ah, my friend, do not forget that soft sins make hard lodgings. Jacob knew it that night at Bethel when he lay down on the hard ground and took a stone for his pillow. You look him over, as he lies there, and you say, "He is only a fraud, a deceiver; he is only getting his just deserts." Ah, how little hope there would be for any of us if God dealt with

us in that way. But God's heart is the heart of true fatherhood and He determined to give Jacob a new chance. And so there comes to the poor, tired boy, mean and wicked tho he is, that wonderful vision of God's infinite mercy and compassion. He sees a great ladder, with its feet on the earth, reaching up to heaven; he sees angels, coming and going, with swift feet and tender faces, on this heavenly ladder; from the top of the ladder a Presence bends over him with a tenderness that he had never seen even on the face of his father, the gentle Isaac; and in a voice of infinite graciousness he hears God saying to him that He is the God of his father and that He will watch over him, and if he repents of his sin, and is true to God, God will be true to him forever. My friend, you that have wandered away from God, you may be sure that God feels that way about you to-night, and is seeking to make you see His mercy and tenderness. The whole story of the life of Jesus Christ is one great vision of the mercy of God to sinful men. The tenderest story you ever heard about mercy is not strong enough to really illustrate God's mercy

and willingness to give you salvation, and yet we hear some wonderful stories of mercy.

A mother once went to London in search of a dissolute daughter, and was directed to a midnight mission. She had no clue by which she might find her lost one among the millions of that vast city. It was suggested that she might put her own picture where each one entering might see it. She did so, and, from afar, watched the incoming strangers. One after another passed it with an indifferent glance, but at length there came a young woman who paused, started, clasped her hands with grief, and sobbed aloud before the photograph. The mother arose, gathered the weeping outcast in her arms, exclaiming, with the ardent and joyful emphasis of love, "My daughter! The lost is found." She returned to her mother's home and to her mother's God. But with even greater tenderness than that does Jesus go seeking after the lost lambs, and in so doing reveals to us the mercy of God.

I doubt not that some one here is listening to me now, who longs for the comfort and safety of the Christian life. You look at it

from afar and wish you were a Christian. All your life you have expected sometime to give yourself with earnestness to the Christian life, but the years are passing and you are farther away than ever. The enemy of your soul shows you the difficulties in the way until you are like the spies which Moses sent into the promised land, who came back with the grapes and the pomegranates, and with wonderful stories of the richness of the land, but scared because of visions of giants who made them feel like grasshoppers in their presence. So the difficulties of the Christian life loom up before you and make you a coward. Oh, I would that you might have a vision such as Jesus had when He said, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven." Jesus saw all the devils pulled from their thrones and cast down into the deep. Nothing can stand against the poor sinner who with humble heart surrenders himself to God through Jesus Christ. No trying circumstances can come to us in this life which can take away the peace of a young man who devotes himself to the service of Christ. You may conjure up all the evil conditions you

can think of, and you can not imagine any young man being put in a harder place than was the young Stephen, whose story Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles. Stephen was not a preacher. He was a layman; a young man who had been selected because of his ability in business and his fidelity to Christ to serve the early church in a business capacity. But one day, when he had opportunity, Stephen bore his earnest testimony for his Master, and the mob of evil men became so enraged that they stoned him to death; and as he was dying, some of them became so fierce that they gnashed on him with their teeth; but afterward they bore testimony that under that terrible experience his face was like the face of an angel in its glorious beauty and light, and at the very last he looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." The mob could not stand that, and so they prest him to his death, and dying, he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Oh, my friends, the God who gave that vision to

Stephen is your Heavenly Father, and the Christ to whom Stephen committed his passing soul is making intercessions for you at the right hand of God. Give Him your heart here and now.

THE SOUL'S HEARTHSTONE

“And the fire was bright.”—Ezekiel 1 : 13.

A WONDERFUL vision is this from which I have selected my text. The prophet saw what appeared to him a great looking-glass of glowing metal, and he beheld, coming out of the midst of it, the likeness of four living creatures, and every one of them had four faces, and every one of them four wings, and these glowing creatures shone like burnished brass. They seemed to be messengers of the Most High God, and they went whithersoever the Spirit of God desired. They were not only beautiful and splendid, they were alert and quick in their service, and went to and fro on their errands of mercy like flashes of lightning.

Now, I do not presume to dogmatize on the meaning of this vision. Most of the great Biblical scholars think that these living creatures are visions of angels, messengers of God who go on missions of mercy from their Heavenly Father's throne to all parts of the

universe, whithersoever He sends them. But whatever may be true concerning the special message meant to be given by the vision, this is true, that each of these living creatures was in the likeness of a man, and whatever other faces they had, each of them had the face of a man, and tho they had wings by which they could fly, each of them had the hands of a man under his wings. And whether they were intended to represent angels or men, in the essential revelation concerning their character and their relation to God they are full of teaching for every one of us.

I have called our theme to-night "The Soul's Hearthstone," because it has not to do with the warming or lighting of a man from without, but with the illumination and the warming of his nature from within. The prophet as he beheld noted that, "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches: the fire went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and

returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning." It is this bright fire within the soul of man which we are to study. It is the highest glory of a man that he may be lighted from on high. In the Book of Proverbs it is declared that "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," and the Psalmist says that God will light his candle. It is a testimony to the greatness of man's nature that he has the capacity of being set on fire to right living and right purposes by the heavenly flame, and that is the message that I want to bring to you to-night, that you may be lighted of God, and your soul's hearthstone may be warmed with heavenly fire, and the way of life may be illuminated for you from heaven.

I

God will reveal Himself to every man's soul. God does not deal with us as races or tribes of men. He deals with us as individuals, and it is well for us, very frequently, to disentangle ourselves from the community or the city and realize our own individual life, not only our freedom as individuals, but

our responsibility. Watkinson, the English preacher, says that Ezekiel is peculiarly the teacher of individuality. His great message was to detach the person from the tribe. He took the individual and made a wide margin around him, and sought to make the individual conscious of his isolation and accountability. I think we need that very much in our own time. We need to protect ourselves from the tyranny of the crowd that surges around us in the great city. We are liable to forget ourselves in such a deluge of personalities. One of the greatest perils of our day is to lose the sense of individuality and merge ourselves in communities and corporations and syndicates. For we must remember that in just so far as we sacrifice our individuality, we merge ourselves in the mass and part with our distinctive greatness and splendor as men. What a man needs to-day is to rise up against the multitude and assert himself and say, "I also am a man, just as surely a man as if I were the only man under the sun."

Now, then, to each human soul, because it is His child, God reveals Himself and comes with heavenly fire to light the flames from

above. You remember how He came to Moses. We do not know how He came the first time in Egypt when Moses was young, and when God so stirred his soul with indignation against the brutality and lust and wickedness of the Egyptian court that he made the great choice, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the despised Hebrews than to enjoy the pleasures of the palace as the adopted and flattered son of Pharaoh's daughter. He fled away into the wilderness and until he was eighty years of age he herded sheep on the slopes of Mount Horeb in the desert. And then God came again to reveal Himself and rekindle the fire in the heart of Moses. Coming along across the desert pasture one day, Moses beheld the bush aflame with fire, and he put his shoes off his feet in holy reverence, and talked to his God. And there was kindled that day another fire in the heart of Moses himself. He had come out a sheep-herder in the morning; he went home at night a prophet and a statesman of the Most High God, to go forth and appear before Pharaoh in his palace and dominate him and master him; to lead out the hosts of God's

people from Egypt, to climb Mount Sinai and commune with God until he should become the mightiest law-giver of all the centuries. No man who bares the hearthstone of his soul that God may build His fire thereon can tell what will happen to him for good. Moses and David were only sheep-herders, unknown and of little account, until God kindled His fire in their souls, and one became the law-giver of the race and the other its mightiest singer. Saul was only a bigoted, cruel, young lawyer, without clients, until he met Jesus Christ near the gates of Damascus, but the heavenly fire was kindled in his soul, and it burned until, transformed into Paul, he became the mightiest evangel of all the ages and gained an immortal record as a blessing to mankind. Dwight Moody was only a shoe-clerk, with no education, no gift of speech, of not much value anywhere, until one day an earnest disciple of Jesus Christ came into the shoe-store and took hold upon that dumb young clerk with loving purpose and won his soul to God, and the heavenly fire was kindled there. Oh, how bright the fire was! How it burned until it blazed a shining path from

ocean to ocean, and from land to land, until tens of thousands of redeemed souls blest God for the name of Dwight Moody!

My friend, no one knows what infinite value there is in you if you will but yield your soul to be the hearthstone for the fire of God. There are possibilities in you that you do not dream of. When once your nature is warmed from heaven and the radiant beams of the Sun of Righteousness have called into activity the bulbs that have been buried under your selfishness and sin—ah, then your life will bud and blossom and be clothed upon with beauty and with usefulness!

II

This thought of the bright fire glowing on the hearthstone of a man's soul suggests to us the communion and fellowship possible between a man and his God. And I assure you that that heavenly fire in the human heart is the surest guaranty to true happiness and peace. The most interesting and delightful people who have ever lived have received that which made them so charming from the fire

on the soul's hearthstone. One of the most famous Christians of the last generation was the English General Gordon, commonly known as "Chinese Gordon," who lost his life in the Sudan. He was more famous as a Christian than for anything else, altho his heroism was of so high a type as to make him sure of a place in history forever. Mr. Huxley, the scientist, who was not partial to Evangelical Christianity, nevertheless said that General Gordon was "the most refreshing character of the century." That which made him so refreshing was the bright fire on his soul's hearthstone.

One of the saints of tne earlier time, who was a marvelous blessing to the world, was Catherine of Siena. She was the daughter of a poor tanner, born in the lowliest quarter of the city of Siena, and when she was a mere child of eight, she had a vision of Jesus standing in the sunset in the clouds above the city, and from that hour she was the bride of Christ, and became one of the greatest forces of her generation. And there is on record an account of how certain learned doctors went to hear her preach, with con-

tempt in their hearts, or at least curiosity and nothing more. They came back weeping, they knew not why, for the Holy Spirit rested upon Catherine that night. They went to scorn, they came back home to sob. The holy fire on the good woman's hearthstone melted their stubborn opposition.

And your great happiness must depend on this fire in the soul. Bishop Anderson, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, spent a day with Bishop Goodsell very shortly before that good man's departure from the earth. The Bishop preached in the morning and was just leaving the church to take the train in order to meet another engagement. As he passed out of the door of the church he was met by a reporter who said, "I understand this has been a very interesting service. Would you be good enough to give me the essential features of it?" "Well," said the Bishop, "I should be very glad to, my friend, but I am under the necessity of taking the train in just a few minutes. I have only time to walk to the depot. If you care to walk along with me, we can converse as we walk and I will be very glad to give you any information that

•

will be of value to you." So they walked along and the Bishop told him about the service. Evidently his courtesy and the courtliness so characteristic of Bishop Goodsell impressed the reporter; and after he had obtained all the information that he desired, he turned to the Bishop and said: "I wish to thank you, sir, for your gracious courtesy; and now let me ask you a question, if you have no objections; you seem to be unusually approachable for a man in your position, and I should like, if I may, to ask you a question I have thought about a good many times. Now, tell me, don't you preachers have an awfully dull time of it?" Then he said, "You don't smoke, do you?" "No," said the Bishop. "And you don't chew, do you?" "No," answered the Bishop. "And you don't go to the theater?" "No; I don't go to the theater." "And you never play cards?" "No; I never play cards." "Well, it does seem to me, now, honestly and frankly, that you preachers would have an awfully dull time of it." And Bishop Anderson says he wishes the whole world could have heard Goodsell's response. As simply

and frankly as a child, he told that man of the world how, away back yonder, in the day of his boyhood, God's Spirit had touched his heart and brought him into the new light, and how a little later He made it very clear to him that he was called to the work of the Christian ministry, and how, in the days of his early manhood, he had given himself up to this divine call, and how the growth of opportunities in the Christian ministry had been a constant surprize to him, until he had come to see the extension of God's kingdom in all lands and in the islands of the sea, and what glorious fellowship he had had with the best men of his time, and what an unfailling inspiration he had found in being God's servant through all the years. It was a magnificent defense of the joys of the Christian life and he sent that reporter away with a glimpse into another world, infinitely higher and sweeter and richer than he had known.

My dear friend, there is no joy like the beautiful holy joy that will warm your heart when the glowing flames on the altar of your soul make you know that God loves you and

His tenderness is about you and will guide you, not only here in this world, but to any world to which He may call you.

It may seem to you now in your bright youth that you do not need a guide, but the heavy loads will come, and the dark hours, and the trying times, and the great mysteries when only the guidance of Him who makes your heart like a warm fireside can give you confidence and peace. There is nothing more exquisitely beautiful than Bret Harte's poem that tells the story of what death really is to the man who lives in fellowship with God:

As I stand by the cross on the lone mountain's crest,
Looking over the ultimate sea,
In the gloom of the mountain a ship lies at rest,
And one sails away from the lea.
One spreads its white wings on a far-reaching track,
With pennant and sheet flowing free;
One hides in the shadow with sails laid aback—
The ship that is waiting for me!

But lo! in the distance the clouds break away!
The Gate's glowing portals I see;
And I hear from the outgoing ship in the bay
The song of the sailors in glee.
So I think of the luminous footprints that bore
The comfort o'er dark Galilee;
And wait for the signal to go to the shore,
To the ship that is waiting for me.

III

Another thought I must not fail to press home upon you from our theme to-night, and that is, that if we shut the heart's door against the call of God, and will not permit our souls to be lighted by the heavenly flame, we open the way for a baleful fire to be lighted on the hearthstone of the soul—the influence of which will not only work disaster to ourselves but to those who come in contact with us. Phillips Brooks, in one of his great sermons on “The Candle of the Lord,” sets out with graphic clearness the possibility of the human candle being plunged down to hell and lighted at the yellow flames that burn out of the dreadful brimstone of the pit, until we see a man who is rich in every brilliant human quality cursing the world with the continual exhibition of the devilish instead of the Godlike in his life. When the power of pure love appears as a capacity of brutal lust; when the holy ingenuity with which man may search the character of his fellow man, that he may help him to be his best, is turned into the unholy skill with which the bad man studies his

victim, that he may know how to make his damnation most complete; when the almost divine magnetism which is given to a man in order that he may instil his faith and hope into some soul that trusts him is used to breathe doubt and despair through all the substance of a friend's reliant soul; when wit, which ought to make truth beautiful, is deliberately prostituted to the service of a lie; in all these cases, and how frequent they are no man among us fails to know, you have simply the spirit of man kindled from below, not from above, the candle of the Lord burning with the fire of the devil. Oh, my friend, it is a terrible thing to go through life with the devil's fire burning on the hearthstone of your soul, burning out there everything that is good and pure and holy, giving no real warmth to bless those whom you love, shedding forth an influence that will do harm to those who admire you or are led by you. How many times I have seen children trying to warm themselves by an irreligious father's fire, who have been singed as fatally as moths are destroyed in the street-lamp at night. My friends, you were not made to burn at

the flames of hell. Your nature belongs to God, and only by yielding yourselves as a wick to His fire can your soul come to its true happiness, your personality to its noble usefulness, and your life become a hearthstone where every one who is attracted by your influence shall be comforted and inspired and blest.

THE WHEELS OF PROVIDENCE

“Their work was as it were a wheel within a wheel.”—Ezekiel
1 : 16.

THE theme suggested here is one of the greatest that the human mind can contemplate. It deals with the presence of God in human activity, the pervading personality of God in all our human life, controlling and mastering the universe in which we live, causing all things to work together to bring about good to His children. It speaks of the God who rides upon the wings of the wind, who makes the thunder-storm His scavenger, driving off poisonous vapors and cleansing the atmosphere that it may nourish human life; the God who makes the frost and the snow and the ice, as well as the earthquake and the volcano, to be factors in the health and blessing of the world. We are not able always to see the working of the machinery; wheels work within wheels that are hidden from our

vision; but the long course of history proves to us that the supreme dominating factors of the universe are the revolving wheels of God's providence. This is brought out very beautifully in a poem written by Derzhavin, a Russian author. It shows the divine benevolence of God as a ruling factor in the universe with such clearness that the Emperor of Japan has had it translated into Japanese, and it is hung up, embroidered with gold, in the Temple of Jeddo. It has also been translated into the Chinese and Tatar languages, written on a piece of priceless silk, and suspended in the Imperial palace at Peking. Its length precludes my quoting all of it, but I hope that some paragraphs of it may bring before our minds a reverent and impressive conception of the benevolent activity of God in relation to our own lives. The poet sings:

O thou eternal One! whose presence bright
All space doth occupy, all motion guide;
Unchanged through time's all-devastating flight;
Thou only God! There is no God beside!
Being above all beings! Three-in-one!
Whom none can comprehend, and none explore,
Who fillst existence with thyself alone,
Embracing all, supporting, ruling o'er;
Being whom we call God—and know no more!

In its sublime research, philosophy
 May measure out the ocean deep, may count
 The sands or the sun's rays—but God! for thee
 There is no weight nor measure; none can mount
 Up to thy mysteries. Reason's brightest spark,
 Tho kindled by thy light, in vain would try
 To trace thy counsels, infinite and dark;
 And thought is lost ere thought can soar so high.

Thou from primeval nothingness didst call,
 First chaos, then existence. Lord! on thee
 Eternity had its foundation, all
 Sprung forth from thee,—of light, joy, harmony,
 Sole origin; all life, all beauty, thine.
 Thy word created all, and doth create;
 Thy splendor fills all space with rays divine;
 Thou art, and wert, and shalt be! Glorious,
 Light-giving, life-sustaining Potentate!

What am I then? Naught!
 Naught! But the effluence of thy light divine,
 Pervading worlds, hath reached my bosom, too;
 Yes, in my spirit doth thy spirit shine,
 As shines the sunbeam in a drop of dew.
 Naught! but I live, and on hope's pinions fly
 Eager toward thy presence.
 I am, O God! and surely thou must be!
 Thou art! directing, guiding all, thou art!
 Direct my understanding then, to thee;
 Control my spirit, guide my wandering heart;
 Tho but an atom midst immensity,
 Still I am something, fashioned by thy hand!
 I hold a middle rank 'twixt heaven and earth,
 On the last verge of mortal being stand,
 Close to the realm where angels have their birth,
 Just on the boundaries of the spirit land!
 The chain of being is complete in me;

In me is matter's last gradation lost,
And the next step is spirit—Deity!
I can command the lightning and am dust!
A monarch, and a slave; a worm, a god!
Whence came I here, and how? so marvelously
Constructed and conceived? Unknown! this clod
Lives surely through some higher energy,
For from itself alone it could not be!
Creator, yes! Thy wisdom and thy word
Created me! Thou source of life and good!
Thou spirit of my spirit, and my Lord!
Thy light, thy love, in the bright plenitude,
Filled me with an immortal soul, to spring
Over the abyss of death, and bade it wear
The garments of eternal day, and wing
Its heavenly flight beyond the little sphere,
Even to its source, to thee, its author there.

Oh, thoughts ineffable! Oh, visions blest!
Tho worthless our conception all of thee,
Yet shall thy shadowed image fill our breast
And waft its homage to thy Deity.
And, when the tongue is eloquent no more,
The soul shall speak in tears of gratitude.

I

This wheel within a wheel is at work in every human life, and it is not hard to trace it afterward, tho it is not always so easy to be sure at the time. We can imagine Joseph, fresh from his happy life with his father, in-

toxicated with his dreams and visions, when he is suddenly seized by the angry hands of his envious brothers and sold away into slavery to have been very much shocked, and we would not have wondered if, for a time, his faith in God had been shaken. And then we find him in Egypt, where by his cheerfulness and the charm of his personality, sustained by his faith in God, and the assurance of his heart that all shall be well with him, he comes into a place of great influence and power. And then suddenly we see him, by a most cruel arrangement of circumstances, through no possible fault of his own, dragged from this new position of strength and achievement and condemned to a dungeon. Surely, now, Joseph will lose his faith and his confidence. But he does not. He goes on praying to God, and after a time, when God's purpose is fully ripe, he comes out of the dungeon to the palace of Pharaoh, to be prime minister in Egypt, and to save the people alive. Now, looking back on the history, we can see the wheel within the wheel that was all the time revolving for the blessing of Joseph, for the enlarging of his sphere of

usefulness, and to make him a greater benefactor to the world. Everything in the story of Joseph that looked cruel and hard at the time was a blessing in disguise, the wheel within the wheel. So some things may have happened in your life that have shaken your faith in the goodness and kindness of God's purpose toward you, but it is only the wheel within the wheel, and some day, when you look back over your life, as Joseph looked back over his from the palace of Egypt, when he was able to send food to save his family from starving, you will know that in every one of these experiences which have seemed mysterious and inexplicable there has been the hand of God, full of mercy and kindness. Let us trust God in the dark, as Joseph did, and we shall find that the God who stood by him and kept him in peace and brought him to victory, will be our God, who will never fail us.

II

God often makes one wheel work within another wheel in our lives to humanize us; to give sympathy and kindness to our hearts,

to help us to be able to put ourselves in another's place and appreciate the sorrows and the trials which they endure.

A very interesting story is told of the English queen mother, Alexandra. While she was still the Princess of Wales, she lost her eldest son, the Duke of Clarence, and her mother heart was broken by his death. But a queen has many duties to perform and this noble woman tried to conceal her grief, which was revealed only in her broken health and in a growing tenderness and consideration for others. Soon after the death of her son she was walking in a quiet place near the palace of Sandringham, which was then her home, when she met an old woman sobbing and tottering under a load of packages. It seems that the woman was a carrier and supported herself by shopping and doing errands in the market-town for the country people. "But the weight is too heavy at your age," said the princess. "Yes. You are right, ma'am. I have to give it up, and if I give it up I will starve. Jack carried them for me—my boy—ma'am." "And where is he now?" inquired the princess. "Jack! he's dead. Oh, he is

dead!" she cried with breaking heart. Without a word the princess hurried on, but her friend who was with her saw the future queen draw her veil over her face to hide the tears. Not many days after a beautiful little cart, drawn by a stout donkey, stopt at the old woman's door. And afterward she drove to and fro on her errands in great comfort. But for years she did not know that her benefactress was the queen of England, who also had a dead boy. Ah, the wheel within a wheel of a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.

A young man spoke to me the other day about a certain woman whom he greatly admired because of the gentleness and sweet charm of her nature, and remarked, "She has had a great deal of trouble," and I replied to him, "No doubt that is the secret of her peculiar sweetness and charm." The wheel within the wheel had wrought in her nobility and beauty of character. If we submit ourselves to the wheels of God's providence, they work only to make us noble and to bless us.

III

Our personal salvation must come from these wheels of providence working in our hearts. The Spirit of God moves mysteriously and unseen in the human breast, but the result we can see. Perhaps you have tried to live a clean life with your unclean heart and you have failed, and you doubt the possibility of such a transformation in your nature that a clean life would flow forth from your heart. You surely ought not to doubt it with all the analogies of nature about us to-day. Look at a man like Luther Burbank, the wizard worker in botany in California. He takes a tree that has been going to the bad for ages, and that has become mean, noxious, ugly. He begins to treat it, and by and by he delivers it from habits that have been fashioned by centuries. He turns its life, its energies, into fresh channels, and, to use the words of his biographer—"By the shock of re-creation" he makes it a thing of beauty and fragrance and fruitfulness! So Dr. Watkinson says, if a clever man can go into nature and break a tree of its bad habits

and make of it a thing of beauty and glory, what can the great Gardener of human hearts do when He puts forth all of His strength on the penitent soul? Can not God break us of habits fashioned by years? Can not His grace turn our energies into better channels? Can not He, by the shock of re-creation, make of us new creatures and strengthen us to walk in newness of life? Nature teems with analogies of conversion. If you go away from your house some day, leaving your ink-pot open where the sun shines through the window on it, when you go back your ink is gone. And if you will go out and look up into the sky, if the conditions are favorable, you may see your bottle of ink in the rainbow. Nature knows how to cleanse and refine and transfigure and transform, and surely you can not believe that in a world where every day you see the miracle of renewal and cleansing and transfiguration, the only thing that can not be changed is the human soul, that which is more important to change than anything else. But, thank God, we do not have to depend on analogy. The world teems with illustrations, with living, credible witnesses of the power

of God to work in a human soul, making the unclean clean, and transforming the sinful heart into harmony with the soul of Jesus Christ.

A lady told me only the other day a most interesting story of the conversion of her father. He was a successful actor, and had been a number of years on the stage. He was not a dissipated man, but a man careless of spiritual things and living without faith and hope in God. One day, in a strange city, in company with a group of other actors of the company with which he was playing, he was wandering about the streets without any particular aim, save to be in the open air, when passing a cottage he heard a woman singing in a singularly sweet but very sad voice. He slipt up to the window, scarcely knowing why he did so, and at the fireplace sat a mother holding her dead child in her arms. He could not be sure, but he was imprest that the child was dead. The mother was singing:

‘Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?’

Tremendously imprest with the strange sight, he motioned to the others, one of whom was a singer who had a singing part in the play, and as she drew near, the sad, sweet voice of the woman within came to them:

“I have long withstood his grace;
Long provoked him to his face;
Would not harken to his call;
Grieved him by a thousand falls.”

The little group who had been so strangely drawn to the place made themselves known, and went in, and found that the little babe had been ill and the husband had been away all night on a drunken spree, and the mother, keeping her sad vigil, had had the unutterable grief of seeing her child die in her arms, and not knowing that there was any one within hearing, her lonely, broken heart had burst forth in Charles Wesley's old hymn, in appeal to the mercy of God. Her unexpected visitors did what they could to help her, and went away thinking of nothing else but the scene they had witnessed. That night at the theater, a strange thing happened. When the singer who had been of the party stood up before the audience to sing the gay song which

was her part, without any premeditation, her conscience was so aroused that she began, instead:

“Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?”

and bursting into tears, left the stage. Both this woman and the lady’s father, who told me the story, were at once converted to Christ, and this man became a most devoted Christian, and tho that was many years ago, he has ever since lived a life of fruitful Christian service, and thanks God every day for the strange Providence that led him to the Savior.

God waits to work the same blest transformation in your heart.

THE RAINBOW ABOUT THE THRONE

“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah.”
—Ezekiel 1 : 28.

EZEKIEL had seen a vision of the throne of God and upon it he had seen one like unto the Son of man. He had been filled with awe at the majesty and sublimity of the throne, and as he watched with reverence, about the throne came the rainbow. Altogether it makes a beautiful theme. There is nothing more splendid in all the panorama of nature than the rainbow. It is not only beautiful, but there is something about it that is exalted, that lifts the soul upward. It teaches us not only the omnipotence of God, but when we connect it with its story in the Bible, it teaches us also of His love. When the lightnings have died away and the noise of the storm is spent, and the fields and pastures are dripping with the summer shower, then it is that the rainbow comes forth on

the back of the retreating storm as a messenger of God. The celestial arch connecting heaven and earth appeals to the very deepest things in a man's nature and lifts his soul into confidence and trust.

Like all these early memories of Genesis, memories of the childhood of the race, traces or fragments of them may be found among all the ancient peoples. Every one of the ancient nations has religious ideas connected with the appearance of the rainbow. The Greeks considered it as the path on which Iris, the messenger of the King and Queen of Olympus, traveled from heaven to earth; Homer describes the rainbow as placed in the clouds to be a sign to man either of war or icy winter. But Iris herself was very frequently identified with the rainbow, and she was considered to be the daughter of Wonder, by Brightness, the daughter of Oceanus, which parentage describes appropriately the nature and origin of the rainbow. Her usual epithets are "swift-footed" and "gold-winged," and the probable etymology of her name points to the connection between earth and heaven, between man and the Deity; and

thus she is the conciliating, the peace-restoring goddess, and is represented with a herald's staff in her left hand. The Persians regarded the rainbow as a divine messenger. An old Persian picture shows a winged boy on a rainbow and before him kneels an old man in a posture of worship. The Hindus describe the rainbow as a weapon in the hands of Indras, with which he hurls flashing darts upon the wicked giants, and the Chinese consider it as foreboding trouble and misfortunes on earth. But the Hindus regard it as also a symbol of peace, which appears to man when the combat of the heavens is silent.

The Bible story of the rainbow is far more coherent. We see Noah, after the ark has landed on Mount Ararat, coming forth with his family in the dawn of the new era of the world, after the retreating waters of the flood. He goes forth to worship and builds his altar unto God, and the Lord makes a covenant with him and tells him that He will make the bow in the clouds after rain to be the token of that covenant; a token that can be seen in every land under heaven. No man shall go beyond its reach—and wherever that token

is seen, it shall be a witness to the pledge of God, that He will never again deluge the world and that summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, shall follow each other in their turn until time shall be no more. Sometimes you hear the cheap critic ask, "But, was there no rainbow before the flood?" Of course there was. There must always have been rainbows, from the time the sun and rain first knew each other. Ages before man was created, when there was no eye to look on them save God and the angels, the heavenly hosts must have rejoiced at the beauty of the rainbow in the sky above the ancient mountains. But, as Joseph Parker said, old forms may be put to new uses. Physical objects may be clothed with moral meanings. The stars in the heaven and the sand by the sea-shore may come to be unto Abraham a family register. One day common bread may be turned into sacramental food, and ordinary wine may become as the blood of atonement! The rainbow, which was once nothing but a thing of evanescent beauty, created by the sun and the rain, after that morning of Noah's worship on the mountain top, became the

token of a covenant and was sacred as a revelation from heaven. A few years ago some one brought over a flock of skylarks and turned them loose on Long Island. John Burroughs tells how he once was wandering in the woods listening to one, as in the ecstasy of his upward flight he would burst into song, when he saw an old Englishman also listening. The Englishman had not known that there were any skylarks on Long Island. He had not heard one for thirty years, since he left his English home, and when he heard that old familiar bird-song of his boyhood, he took off his hat as tho he were in church and lifted his eyes to heaven and the tears ran down his face as he listened. He might have heard a thousand skylarks sing in England and never have shed a tear, but to hear the dear song in a strange land, it was a token of a covenant between him and his old home that touched the deepest fountain of his soul. So God did not create a sign, He did no violence to the universe, but He took the rainbow and set it apart to be a token of this new covenant which He had made with His children.

I

We may see suggested in our theme that the human life is full of clouds, across our clouds God puts the arch of the rainbow as a token of His presence, and of His willingness to be helpful and full of blessing to us. I think it is interesting that the rainbow goes all the way through the Bible with us, from first to last. We find the rainbow first in the Book of Genesis, and early in the book, in the story of the world's childhood. It is there that God paints His bow in the cloud and promises never to desert us, and gives it to us as a token of His mercy, an assurance that His presence shall go with us. And again in Isaiah we have reference to it, when God says: * "In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting loving-kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, for this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will

* Isa. 54.

not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith Jehovah that hath mercy on thee." And again in Ezekiel we find in our text the rainbow of God's mercy round about the throne of His judgment and power. And then again in the last book of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation, we have two references to the rainbow, each one of them used to suggest the love and mercy of God, which always attend on His majesty and power. And so, if we follow through the history of God's dealings with His people, we shall see that God hath put His rainbow on every cloud. One day David was feasted at the banquet of the king and on the next day he was an outcast in the cave of Adullam, but God's bow was in the clouds and He gave him psalms to sing in the wilderness. The Egyptians overtake Moses with his struggling band of pilgrims and the Red Sea confronts them, but God's bow is in the clouds, a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day, and they are guided safely. The women, on

the way to Joseph's tomb to anoint the poor wounded body of Jesus, said among themselves, "Who will roll us away the stone?" But God's bow was in the clouds, and the stone was rolled away, and they saw a vision of angels who told them of the resurrection of their Lord. The disciples walked on the way to Emmaus, sorrowful and sad, saying about Jesus, "We had hoped that it was he who should have redeemed Israel," and, lo, when they took their stranger friend in with them to their evening meal, their eyes were opened and they beheld their Lord. Paul tells us that when he was first called to stand before the tyrant to answer for his faith, that even he trembled, but God's bow was in the clouds, and he tells us: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." And there are many of you who hear me who have had your own cave of Adullam, and have known your dark clouds and trying experiences, and yet you could bear glad testimony that in the darkest hour God's bow was in the cloud full

not only of beauty, but tender with mercy and the assurance of divine help.

II

The rainbow as a token of God's covenant with man speaks the same message all around the world to all the tribes of men. It should suggest to us that we who have received the Gospel of Christ, and have known the joy of our sins forgiven, are under obligations to carry the same message of mercy wherever God has set His bow in the clouds. It should quicken us in our willingness to give of our substance to carry the Gospel to foreign lands. For the same God who so loved us that He gave His Son to die on the cross, that our sins might be forgiven, is the God of the Eskimo and the African and the Hindu and the Chinaman and the Japanese. He is God over all. They, too, are His children. He sets the rainbow as an arch in their clouds, and we are debtors to them, and must carry to them the light and hope and mercy which has been given to us. The world would speedily be converted to Christ if we could all feel this obligation as we ought.

III

The rainbow is a token of mercy. It suggests to us the mediation of Christ which brings heaven and earth together. The rainbow always ends at the earth. Many is the boy who has tried to chase to the foot of it that he might find there the bag of gold. But its span reaches high in the heavens, and thus it binds earth and heaven together. So Christ is the rainbow around the throne, born of our flesh, cradled in Bethlehem's manger, a boy in a carpenter-shop at Nazareth, reaching to our earth, brother with us, and yet reaching up to the highest heavens, taking hold upon the very throne of God in His power and majesty and goodness. So He becomes the rainbow which ties heaven and earth together. And this arch of mercy in the Gospel is a token of equal power for all sorts and conditions of men. The vilest sinner, as well as the most self-righteous Pharisee, finds in this rainbow of mercy the bridge which is needed to span the gulf between his soul and God. I have been reading recently a book

by Harold Begbie, entitled, in this country, "Twiceborn Men." When Mr. Begbie brought this book out in England, he called it "Broken Earthenware." It is a story of the most utterly lost men that could be found in London who found in the rainbow of mercy a bridge which spanned the distance between the vilest wretch and the saint of God. I can only hint at a single story in these tremendous human documents. One he calls "The Plumber." It gives a picture of a skilled artizan which is literally heart-breaking. The degradation, the dishonesty, of this man is almost incredible in a civilized country, and yet this man was completely transformed. He had been constantly threatening his wife, and she followed him to the public-house one day to get him out if possible, for nearly all of his very large earnings were spent there. He was full of irritation at the sight of her at the door, and he said, "God, if you don't leave me alone I'll—" He had exhausted blasphemy and malice. He did not know what to say. He paused for a moment with that murderous scowl on his face and finally to the amazement of his wife, and those about

him, ended the sentence by saying, "I'll sign the pledge." And he went straight from that public-house to a Salvation Army friend he knew, and told him that he wanted to give up his bad life. The man got him to kneel and ask God for his pardon; got him to come to the meeting, and before them all make confession, and as Christ cast out the demons from that poor fellow at Gadara, so He expelled the devils from this poor man's breast. He was so happy he could have shouted for joy. But he was also so frightened at fear of losing this happiness that he dared not think about it. His description afterward sounds just like this book of Ezekiel. He seemed to be walking in a shining light, on pavements of fire, with the trees waving to him, with his soul dazed by ecstasy. The result of this extraordinary change was that his dissipated companions among whom he worked turned upon him, and, indeed, persuaded the foreman and the manager to dismiss him; and because he had become clean, a pure and sober man, he lost his work. He was driven as a tramp into the country to seek work, and his only comfort was in the words of the

Gospel, "I am the vine and ye are the branches." And when, in his despair, he returned to London, he had to give up all thought of being a plumber. He could get no work; the word was passed around that he had become a saint; and he is now a common laborer, a sweeper of the London streets; but he is one of the happiest men in London. The man's face is a *Te Deum* and he is still walking that shining way and all the trees wave to him in love from his God. Ah, you say, "Religion is surely a good thing for a miserable drunkard, for a man who has lost control over himself." But, my friends, however moral and lifted above this man you may be, if you are not on praying terms with God, you need this rainbow of mercy as well as did this poor plumber. Suppose I put over against this drunken plumber of the London slums, one of the most gifted and brilliant minds of the last century, that wonderfully beautiful and cultivated man, John Ruskin. On Good Friday, 1852, John Ruskin wrote this in his diary: "One day last week I began thinking over my past life, and what fruit I have had, and the joy of it which

has passed away, and of the hard work of it, and I felt nothing but discomfort, for I saw that I had been always working for myself in one way or another. Then I thought of my investigations of the Bible, and found no comfort in that either. This was about two o'clock in the morning, so I considered that I had now neither pleasure in looking to my past life, nor any hope, such as would be my comfort on a sick-bed, of a future one, and I made up my mind that this would never do. So after thinking, I resolved that at any rate, I would act as if the Bible were true, that if it were not I would be, at all events, no worse off than I was before; that I should believe in Christ and take Him for my Master in whatever I did; that to disbelieve the Bible was quite as difficult as to believe it; and when I had done this, I fell asleep. When I arose in the morning, tho I was still unwell, I felt a peace and spirit in me that I had never known before." And years afterward, if you had talked to John Ruskin, he would have told you that this transformation of the inner life was needed just as much by him, brilliant Oxford scholar tho he was, as it was

by the drunken, criminal plumber about whom Mr. Begbie tells us.

My dear friends, the old legend of the bag of gold at the foot of the rainbow has in it a vein of eternal truth. It is the gold of the spirit, the gold of eternal peace, and it is in the rainbow that is round about the throne of God where you may find it. At the foot of the cross where a sinner bows in humble repentance and faith its treasure will always be found.

A MAN ON HIS FEET

“And he said unto me: Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.”—Ezekiel 2 : 1.

THE prophet tells us that when he saw the great vision which he has been describing in the preceding paragraphs, a vision of shining wheels, with strange faces and living creatures coming and going in their midst, and in the midst of it all a throne, with the rainbow of mercy about it, revealing the glory of Jehovah, he was overwhelmed with the majesty of the sight and the consciousness of his own unworthiness, and he fell upon his face before it. Then it was that the voice came to him with this message calling him to stand upon his feet and listen to the message which God would impart to him.

We are quite accustomed in the Bible to see men receiving the message of God on their knees, or prone on their faces, expressing their deep humility and a profound sense of their own lack of worthiness to stand before

God. We see Moses when God appeared to him in the burning bush, bowing himself down to the earth, for he was afraid to look upon God. And at different times we see that rugged soldier Joshua, and the poet-king David, and the brave and fearless Daniel, and John the beloved disciple, when the great visions came to him on the Isle of Patmos—again and again we see these men, who never failed to meet their fellow men eye to eye and face to face, casting themselves down before God in deep humiliation, and there is in this a great and true lesson. As Phillips Brooks has said in commenting on this passage, there is a great truth set forth in all such pictures. It is that only to human humility can God speak intelligibly. Only when a man is humble can he hear and understand the words of God.

But there is here another picture with another truth. When God was about to give this message to Ezekiel, He said to him, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee." Not on his face, but on his feet; not in the attitude of humiliation, but in the attitude of self-respect; not stript of all

strength and lying like a dead man, waiting for life to be given him, but strong in the intelligent consciousness of privilege, and standing alive, ready to cooperate with the living God who spoke to him; so the man now is to receive the word of God. It is not contradictory to the other idea, but it is different from it. When God raised Ezekiel and set him on his feet before He spoke to him, it suggests to us the idea that man may lose the words of God because of a low and groveling estimate of himself as well as because of a proud and conceited one. The best understanding of God can only come to a man when he is upright and self-reverent in his privilege as the son of God. Unless a man honors his own life, he can not get God's best and fullest wisdom; unless you stand upon your feet, you will not hear God speak to you.

I

I think our theme should suggest to us a man's privilege and, therefore, his duty to stand on his feet with his face toward the sky, glowing in the sunshine, enlivened with

hope, and shining with thanksgiving and gladness, in appreciation of his great inheritance as a man. I can not see how we do not all of us catch ourselves laughing sometimes until the tears of joy wet our faces, simply at the gladness of being alive as the children of God. I do not think any grace becomes a true man more than the grace of gladness, and appreciation, and laughter. And it is a great factor in life and in the successful carrying of its burdens. George William Curtis once said that some farmers go up to a fence and look over at the cabbages with a face so sour that the cabbages wilt right down; but that some other men go up and look on the corn-fields with faces so bright and laughter so contagious that the corn-stalks clap their hands for joy.

Charles Lamb, who had sorrow enough, God knows, used to say that a laugh was worth a hundred groans in any market. Russell Conwell tells us, in one of his merry lectures, that he went one day into the market to buy potatoes. He passed by the sour dealer, and the indifferent dealer, and came to the German woman, whose face was like the moon in the last quarter; who was jolly and happy as she

laughed and said, "This basket is eighty cents, and this sixty cents; and this sixty-cent basket is just as good." And Conwell was so happy with her that he said, "Madam, I will take both of them, I will take all that you have." And he tells us that every time the potatoes came upon the table, every eye winked at him, and suggested the happy old German woman's face, and he and his family ate those potatoes with happiness and good digestion. The moral comes out when he learned that after two years the smiling German woman had bought out the sour young man and the indifferent man, and was the prosperous owner of all three stalls.

I am sure if we stood upon our feet in true appreciation of the glorious gifts of God to us in the way He has enriched us in manhood and womanhood, in all the gifts of body and mind and heart, and in the hopes and longings and prophetic aspirations of our souls, that we would say the grace of laughter much more frequently than we do. Man is the only being to whom God has given the grace of laughter, and when a man ceases to laugh, he has begun to degenerate downward

toward the beasts that can not laugh. The Bible tells us there will be a time when all tears shall be wiped away, but there will never be a time when good men will cease to laugh. I have read of a missionary convert in New Guinea, who prayed "for help to live a holy, active life here and go hereafter to the place of laughter," and I think that was a good prayer. When our mouth is filled with laughter and our tongue with singing, then we shall say, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." O man, stand on thy feet and appreciate the dignity and splendor with which God has endowed thee as a man and thank Him with joy and laughter. It is only in that way that we can bless the world as we ought. Christ said to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." He did not say they were to be the gloom or the sorrow or the tears of the world, but the brightness the sunshine, the joy of the world.

It is told in the story of Tom Hood, the poet, that a minister whose face was said to have been as long as a yardstick, and as cold as a gravestone, came in to see him when he was very ill, and said to him in

drawing tones, "Mr. Hood, don't you wish you were a Christian?" Hood looked up at him a moment and replied, "Well, sir, if it made me feel as you look, no." My friends, we must live our religion, not only on great occasions, but in all the ordinary days, thanking God for life, blessing Him for the power to think, and hope, and love, and live forever, and letting these great gifts surround us like an atmosphere until the glorious gospel of the happy God shall be the natural good tidings men shall expect from the light they see in our faces and the laughter they hear on our lips.

II

Our theme should suggest to us our privilege of standing on our feet in fellowship with Christ, sharing with Him the joy of bringing blessing and salvation to the world. There is nothing in this world more joyous and more certain to inspire a man with the consciousness of his true dignity as a man than working with Christ to carry forward the great movements of God in the salvation of the world. The man who is a partner with Christ, who is working together with Him, must in the very

nature of things feel his own self-respect and have reverent thoughts concerning his own manliness. This attitude toward ourselves, while it guards us against meanness which would be beneath our true dignity, also gives us inspiration and joy that no other fellowship could give. This is the secret of the great joy that sustained men like William Carey, and David Livingstone, and Bishop Thoburn, and multitudes of other men and women, many of the world's rarest souls, people who would have graced any place in the centers of culture and power, but who have given themselves for life to heathen lands, to bring the Gospel of Christ to people who are sunk in the deepest degradation. Yet they were never bored by their experiences, their lives never lacked in joy, because they lived in such a sensitive attitude to Jesus Christ that they were conscious of standing on their feet with linked arms in blest fellowship with that divine Personage whose three years of human ministry is filling the whole world with the charm and the glory of His presence.

Dr. Schofield said to a girl in his church, who was going to China as a missionary,

“What makes you want to go to China?” She looked at him in astonishment. “I suppose,” he said, “you are going because of your love for these poor people.” “Not at all,” she replied. “I don’t love them at all. I never had any love for the Chinese, whatever.” “Then why are you going?” “Oh,” she said, “I am going simply because I love Jesus.” Five years afterward he saw her again. “How is it now between you and the Chinese?” he asked. “Ah,” she said, “I love them now.” It was the inspiration of her love for Jesus that created her love for the people. And so it is with every man who comes to appreciate the infinite love of Jesus Christ, in the atonement for himself, and in response to Christ’s great love gives himself to be the friend of Jesus and the partner with Him in men’s salvation. We will first work for men because we love Christ, and then there will grow up in our hearts a love so profound and deep that it will see underneath all the degradation the possibility which Jesus ever saw in men and women. But the supreme inspiration of our love for men must always be the love of our Lord.

And as we give ourselves to partnership in working for others, and carrying their burdens and helping them toward heaven, heaven comes to be the natural port of our souls, because we shall be needed there as we are here to carry on our divine fellowship begun on earth. Some poet tells of a good woman who had thus wrought in fellowship with her Savior and who carried many loved ones on her shoulders, that—

She knocked at the Paradise-gate,
She tirmed at the golden pin.

“Who is this that cometh so late,
And thinks to be let in?”

“Ah! keep me not here without,
Open quickly!” she cried,

“For there are those that need me, need me,
Waiting just inside.”

Weary she was and worn,
Her knees and her shoulders bent.

But she leaped like a yearling doe
Across the threshold of light—

She flew to the arms that drew her, drew her,
As a homing dove takes flight.

One was clasping her wrist,
And one was grasping her gown:

To one that cried to be kissed
Tenderly stooped she down.

As a bird outspreadeth its wings,
She gathered them closely in—

“Now is the time, O children, children,
When life shall at last begin!”

III

Some of you who listen to me have not yet accepted Christ as your Savior and given Him the response of your heart and life in answer to His dying love for you. You ought to see in our theme a call to stand up out of your sins and your wicked ways, out of your selfishness and indifference, and walk upon your feet, redeemed and forgiven through Christ, to live a new life of obedience and righteousness and fellowship with Him.

Luke tells us that on one occasion Jesus borrowed Simon Peter's boat for a pulpit, when a great crowd had gathered and begged to hear Him speak. Peter's fishing-boat was there and Christ asked him to row back a little from the land so the people could all see and hear, and then He preached to them. The sermon is not given to us, but after the sermon was over, the Master told them to row out and put down their nets for fish, but Peter said, in a discouraged tone, that it was no fishing-day at all. They had been fishing all day and taken nothing. Nevertheless, to please Christ, he said he would

put down the net and he did, and the net was so filled that they had to beckon to the other boats to come and help them, and they had more fish than they could take into the boats, and Peter, who had fished all day in vain, suddenly felt that the hand of Christ was in it, and that it was a Divine hand, with more than mortal power, and feeling his own sinfulness and unworthiness, he fell down before Christ with his head on the knees of Jesus and cried out in anguish, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But Jesus called him to his feet and put hope and courage into his heart by saying, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." So, to any one here who is conscious of unworthiness and sinfulness in the sight of God, who sees that in many ways you have been groveling in your spirit in the mire and the clay of life, I would to God that this sermon might be used as a divine appeal to your soul, calling you to stand on your feet. Determine here and now that there shall be no more groveling in sin, living beneath your privilege as a man, but an upright walk as the son of God, in fellowship with the all-

glorious Christ. I wish you might have the spirit of David when he prayed in keen consciousness of his sinful life, "Create in me a new heart, O God." And God heard his prayer. From that hour David walked upright, with his face toward the sky. Saul, stricken down on his way to Damascus, and his eyes opened to see the wickedness of his life, heard the voice of Jesus saying to him, "Arise and stand upon thy feet," and from that hour Paul went forth to his splendid and heroic life. Once in Worcester, Massachusetts, at midnight, a poor drunkard had a kind hand laid on his shoulder by a Christian man. It was like a call from heaven to rise out of drunkenness and stand upon his feet, and from that hour John B. Gough walked forth sober, a new creature in Christ Jesus, to be a blessing to the world. My friend, stand upon your feet to-night and hear the message of God to your own soul!

A MAN ALONE WITH GOD

“Arise, go forth into the plain and I will there talk with thee.”—Ezekiel 3 : 21.

IT was necessary that the young Ezekiel should go forth from the crowd and lose himself in the solitudes of the open plain, that in the silence God might speak to him the great message for which the people were perishing. I do not take it from the reading that the place was at all important. A mountain, or a forest, or an island in the sea would have been just as good. The necessary thing was that the young man should separate himself from the crowd, and the things which distracted his attention, and give his mind and heart a chance for God to speak to him.

We are always going, like a pendulum of a clock, to extremes. There have been ages when men who would serve God all went to the plain or the mountain cave, and hid themselves away as hermits, that they might

escape the temptations of the world and have an opportunity for communion with God. Then there have been other ages, like our own, when the rush and noise and materialism of practical every-day life absorb the attention and there are few who go to the plain for meditation and communion. Our own age has gone to a dangerous extreme in this matter. It has many good things in it, and, on the whole, I am full of hope and believe that the world is constantly growing better; but the danger of our age is that we shall give ourselves up to the outer, physical, spectacular performances of life and lose the life-blood of the soul through lack of hidden communion with heaven, from which all true spiritual life must come.

I

We may find many illustrations of this danger in the literature of our time. Our English ambassador, Mr. James Bryce, recently asked Americans, in a public address, the direct question, "Where are your poets?" in reply to which one of our journalists says

that we might go back at Mr. Bryce and ask him, in turn, "Where are England's poets?" It would be a good reply to him, but it does not answer the question. I fear that the true answer would be that the atmosphere of our time is too dusty and noisy and earthy for poetry. Of course, human nature is as it always was, and poetry wears the winning grace that it ever did. We could love it and delight in it were not our hearts preoccupied. Poetry is in its nature spiritual, while the popular interest of our day is absorbed in a competing materialism. Great corporations, vast cities, steel bridges, mighty navies, transcontinental railways, millions of exports, gigantic fortunes of magic creation,—these and things like them hold our interest. Amid their glitter and din the muse woos us to little purpose. Hence it is that we are in no condition to make demands for poetry, and the engineer, the corporation manager, the corporation lawyer, not the poet, is the man of our desire. And back of all this there is a deeper reason still, in an atmosphere of thought to which the poet is of all men most sensitive. If we are to have great poetry again, we must

have a new epoch of men and women who go to the plain and, alone with God, get messages for humanity.

I think that the one great literary master of our time is a proof of this. There has just passed away from earth in Russia the greatest literary prophet of our age, and I think his story, with which I, like many of you, no doubt, have been refreshing myself, is a proof of the reality of our theme to-night. For thirty years Tolstoy has been in his own way a mighty preacher of the Gospel of Christ. It was a momentous hour for himself, and one fraught with great results for the world, when after a long struggle he found his way to the feet of Christ. The story of that struggle and what led up to it is well known; he has told it himself in imperishable pages. Born to social eminence, educated as a Russian noble, a soldier, a man of "society," and a man of the world, in the worst sense, he excelled his contemporaries by the fulness of vigor with which he flung himself alike into good and bad. Genius crowned him, and success, as it is called, smiled upon him from all sides. After a career of reckless self-

indulgence, he was still to be saved from ruin, but not easily. In the midst of his life the bitter cry of Ecclesiastes broke from his heart—"Vanity of vanities!" And so he was drawn away into the plain with his hungry soul. Long and bitter were the stages by which he groped his way toward the light. At last he found it in the face of Christ, not the official Being set forth in the creeds and ceremonies of the Russian Greek Church, which was the only church he knew, but the simple, strong, earnest Prophet of the *Brotherly Life*. He read the Sermon on the Mount, and pondered what he conceived to be its guiding principles. They led him to a position which not many are fully able to accept, but it afforded him a unique opportunity of preaching a Gospel of Deliverance.

He withdrew from the Court and from cities and public throngs and adulation. Face to face with God, he communed with his own soul and with his Maker. He was seized upon by the Spirit of Him who gave His life upon the cross for the sins of men. He looked about him and saw the peasants of his native Russia going on the way of life like dumb,

driven cattle, serving the selfish interests of heartless capitalists and driven by kings and nobles to the shambles of war. Tolstoy could not hold his peace. These, even the least of them, were his brethren. For them, if he had gifts to use, his genius should be poured out. And the world has no parallel for centuries to the fruit of his wonderful mind in these last three decades. By parables, and stories, and essays, and exhortations, and criticisms, he has toiled in the cause of mankind. He has sought to woo them to love one another, to speak the truth in simplicity, to be content with humble fare, and to earn it by honest labor, to forgive freely, to abjure violence in every form. Tolstoy has not seen clearly some sides of the Gospel, but after all abatements have been fairly made, his influence has been a priceless one on the world. He has challenged the Christianity of the churches of the world and has done more to arouse them to righteousness than any other prophet since John Wesley. And yet it was out of the plain, the lonely Russian steppes, that the prophet came, the most unlikely place on earth. Put a man alone with God and there

is no foot of the globe so barren but out of it may come something splendid and glorious.

II

Our theme this evening is illustrated with great clearness by our Savior in His discourse to His disciples about prayer. It was a time when religion had degenerated into forms and there was much public ceremony but very little inner spirit. Jesus, wishing to make clear to His disciples and to all that should come after them the supreme importance of the hidden spiritual life, says: "Take heed that you do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them; else you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. When, therefore, thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogs and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. . . . But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee. And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites, for

they love to stand and pray in the synagogos and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. . . . But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee." This is a passage which, in my judgment, we need to ponder much in these days. The awful speed with which we live, with express-train, and motor-car, and the aeroplane, and the increased emphasis which has been put upon money-getting in our time, are having a terrible effect in doing away with family worship, and with secret worship for the individual Christian. William Arthur said a few years ago what is still more pertinent in our time, that in the bustle and noise of the activities of every day, the whisperings of the Divine Voice, ever appealing to our hearts, are unheard and unheeded, even as would be the strains of a song-bird amid the din of battle. In the swift race for worldly prosperity or distinction or honor, the messages of Divine love, straight from the Father's heart to ours, fall without leaving any impression, even as

the silvery moon-beams leave no mark upon the granite rock. It is, then, for our soul's health and strength that God frequently uses with us stringent measures, and, by His dealings with us, forces us to think of the unseen, both within us and beyond us. Every now and then we hear the Divine mandate: "Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee."

Everything on earth that has life and growth must have these occasional periods of rest and seclusion. After the earth has been clothed for a few months with the green of springtime and summer and the flowers have rejoiced in blossom, the sun is withdrawn, and the leaves wither and fade, and the blossoms die, and the sap goes down into the root, or into the bulb underground, and there in darkness and seclusion and quiet it gains fresh strength for another period of activity and growth and beauty. If you have an eye strained or weary or sore by much reading or ceaseless watching, you find it necessary to give it rest and seclusion that its marvelous and delicate mechanism may be readjusted and recreated for future calls. If your brain is tired

and your mind becomes confused through long study, you know that the necessity is that you shall retire and give it freedom from its task that it may gain strength for new exertion. Every now and then a business man with large responsibilities resting upon his shoulders, awakens to the fact that he is not made out of iron or steel, but out of flesh and blood and nerves, and that his body and mind are so jaded and weary that retirement in rest and solitude in the hills, or the woods, or by the sea is essential if his great working machine is to be capable of further activity and usefulness. Now these illustrations speak to us of a deep principle in nature and in man—that even darkness and solitude are sometimes absolutely necessary for fit preparation for the best work. We may not say that God could have talked to Ezekiel quite as well in the town as on the plain. If He could, He would.

I have said all these things to illustrate to our minds the great fact that if we are to be true Christians and have developed within us great spiritual personalities, we must give opportunity every day amid the rush of life

for God to talk with us. We must have some time and place when we separate ourselves from all the world, even from our own families. And there must be some little quiet spot where we "shut the door" and talk with God.

Dr. Gunsaulus, in a great sermon on the text, "Shut the Door," raises the question as to where the door is to be found. His suggestion is that after you have shut the door in your own room, outside things may come in and so occupy your mind that God can not talk to you, and he says he wonders sometimes, when trying to have a secret moment in his own life, if there might not have been a second meaning in the word when Jesus said: "I am the door," and that the only way to shut the door on all the world is by giving ourselves completely to Christ. No one knew the world outside as Jesus knew it; no one knows our hearts as He knows them; no one else will take our thoughts, our feelings, our souls; no one else can shut the world out and the soul in. Here is a man who has been trying to pray and shut the door as Jesus told him to do. It takes more intellect to shut

that door than to write Hindustanee or Shakespeare; more character than to marshal an army and lead it to battle. No muscular power will do it; no intellectual refinement or process of philosophical investigation; no wealth. You will have to leave your wealth outside. "Shut the door." It is only the man, in the grandeur of his solitude, in the presence of God. And when a man tries to do that he finds out how hard it is. There is the past. Nothing rankles more than a man's past. There it is, with its head lifted up and saying: "Ah, here I am. Look at me. I know you. I have heard you pray before. Those hands, I know where they have been. That heart, I know how dark it is." Ah, it is a terrible thing to have the past come up like a snake and hiss at the closed door when a man seeks to get alone with his God. Sometimes you think you have the door shut, but the past, that seems like a giant fully armed, too big to get into the door, suddenly transforms, flattens itself out, lies down like a serpent, and by and by you hear it wriggling at the door, hissing. Oh, we must have a door that fits so accurately that whether the

past slithers like a serpent or comes like a giant, we can shut the door. There is only one Person in this universe who can do that, and that is Jesus Christ. He has power on earth to forgive our sins of the past. He can take the sting out of our sins forever. He can blot our sins out of God's record. Christ can shut us in with God where we may commune with Him and find peace and power. Christ has said that if we pray to God in secret, He will reward us openly, and in that secret place of hiding where we talk with God we shall get such power that when we go forth in the public place of temptation we shall overcome in that power.

I must not close without a word to some of you who are not Christians, tho all your life you have heard about Christ. You have been giving yourself to the pursuit of worldly things which seem to you more practical and of more value; but, my friend, you are making a great mistake as to values. There is nothing of so much value as your soul. Some of you were at the great Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893. In the Manufacturers' Building there was a certain place in the

jewelry exhibit where you always saw a crowd. No matter what time of day you passed by, morning, noon, or night, there was always a mass of people there. What was it the crowd wanted to see? Nothing but a cone of purple velvet revolving on an axis, and toward the apex of that cone, a large, beautiful diamond, worth a fabulous sum of money. And people by thousands, and tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands—in the course of the exposition, by millions—came just to look at that one precious stone. It was well worth looking at. But the soul of one man, one woman, one child—not merely the soul of the great, the wise, and the rich, but the soul of the poorest, the most ignorant, the most sorrowful person in this city, the soul of the most neglected child—is worth infinitely more than ten thousand precious stones like that. The man who bought that stone died a while ago in New York, and the woman for whom he bought it would not even go and see him on his dying bed, and was married again in a month. That is all the diamond was worth. But your soul, if through Jesus Christ it is cleansed and redeemed and made pure, will

not only live forever, but it will shine forever in infinite gladness and joy. Pause, I pray you, in the mad rush of life, and give yourself time to be alone with your God, that He may talk with you unto your salvation!

THE WEAK SPOT IN A MAN'S ARMOR*

"Neither shall any strengthen himself whose life is in his iniquity."—Ezekiel 7 : 13 (marginal rendering).

IT is right and wise that we should on Christmas day look on both sides of the great Christmas truth. This morning we looked into the manger crib of Bethlehem and saw Mary with the Child Jesus in her bosom, and we communed together upon the love and tenderness and beauty that gather about the Christmas time. But it is wise for us, before this new Christmas day passes into history, to look faithfully at the other side of the shield and appreciate keenly the awfulness of the sin that called Jesus Christ from heaven that He might give Himself as a ransom to redeem mankind. Christmas is not all joy; it is not all beauty; there is a background as black and dark as hell itself. It was sin that caused Him who was rich for our sakes to become poor, that He might save us.

* A Christmas-night sermon.

In the chapters connected with this striking text we have set forth in a graphic manner the awfulness of sin and the fearful judgments that come upon sin. But, as Joseph Parker says, there is mercy even in the terribleness of the revelation. An opportunity for repentance was created by the very awfulness of the method of revelation. Threatenings are meant to lead to promises. The thunderstorm is sent to avert us from a way that is wrong and to drive us to consideration on account of sin. God does not fulminate merely for the sake of showing His greatness; when He makes us afraid, it is that He may bring us to final peace. Nothing is more evident than that underneath all these denunciations, and in explanation of them, there is a sublime moral reason. These judgments are not exhibitions of omnipotence; they are expressions of a moral emotion on the part of God. These people had departed from Him; they had done everything in their power to insult His majesty and to call into question his holiness and His justice; they had worshiped false gods; and not until the cup of their iniquity was full did the last beam of

light vanish from the sky and the whole heaven become darkened with thunder-clouds.

Our text is an assurance on the part of God that no amount of financial success or political triumph can make a thing which is evil right. Sometimes sin seems to blossom out into beauty and the rod of a man's pride and iniquity is covered with adornment, and the sinner seems to be the proudest and most fascinating personality in the community. But the heart of our theme comes out of God's assurance that no beauty, no seeming success of a sinful life, is really secure, and we know that the world is full of illustrations of that. Judas was successful in betraying Jesus Christ into the hands of His enemies, and he got the money into his own pocket, but we know what an awful failure it was for Judas. And successful, blossoming sin to-day is no safer than it was in the days of Judas.

I

The first thought which I wish to emphasize out of our theme is suggested by the conditions set forth in this chapter, which tells how,

under the judgment of God, because of their sins, a famine is to come upon the country, and the rich people will suffer just as much as the poor. Their gold and silver will be useless, for it can buy nothing. It suggests to me a great and solemn truth which is just as real in our own time as in any day of the world, and that is that sin brings about a famine of soul which money, in any form or in any amount, is powerless to satisfy. In the long run every man and every woman who has not the bread of life to eat must have a soul famine. I think the best definition of a spiritual man I have ever seen, is one given by Phillips Brooks when he says: "A spiritual man is a man who deals with the spirit and the soul of things, and lives for them." And he compares two money-making men. One of them values his money for the comfortable uses he can put it to; the other is not satisfied until he has got at the heart of riches, and absorbed his wealth into his character, and made himself by it a richer nature and a fuller man. Here are two religious men. One of them rejoices in religion for the good it does. He says that it secures order

in this world and saves suffering in the world to come. Another man feeds his heart on the very substance of religion itself. To commune with God and love Him and obey Him is the very life of life. Life would be death without it. Here are two scholars. One of them studies for the advantages that learning brings; the other studies for the pure joy of knowing. Truth and the human mind meet and satisfy each other. You see in all these cases that a man is truly rich not because he has property or religion in the technical sense, or knowledge, but because he is genuinely at the soul of things, in harmony with God and His purpose.

Our final proof of all this must be in Jesus Christ Himself, whose birthday we celebrate to-day. If there is any man here to-night who is getting into his blood the thirst for money, and is tempted to a feeling that the pursuit of wealth is the greatest thing in the world, I beg you on this Christmas night to remember that the great Master of men, He after whose name we wish to be called, never had any and never wanted to have any of this wealth to the pursuit of which men are giving their lives in these days. I am sure we can

not look upon the life of Jesus Christ to-night without feeling that the hunt for money, on its own account, is very vulgar and poor. And if we can really see that, it will calm our fever. It is not necessary that we should be rich. There is no real need of it whatever. The Man who struck the highest, purest note of human life, He who showed God to man, He who brought man to God, He who redeemed the world—He was not rich, but poor. Ah, what an awful thing it would have been if Christ had been a rich man! Conspiring with all man's native passion to be rich, the sight of a rich Redeemer would have turned the money-fever loose until this world would have been a hell indeed.

Of course it is quite possible to mis-read the poverty of Jesus Christ so as to suggest that a man is good simply because he is poor. But that we must not do. Old Father Taylor, of the Seaman's Bethel in Boston, who had great experience with men, used to say that there were three kinds of poor people: "God's poor; the devil's poor, and the poor devils." And I think that was about right. There are people whose sins keep them poor, and there

are other people who sin until they become like beasts of prey in their devilish iniquity. But the true riches lie outside of the question of physical poverty or riches. Only sin can make famine in the soul, and only goodness, loving reverence of God, and sincere obedience to Him, can make a soul rich in all the experiences of human life.

II

I wish we might learn from our theme that no man ever gets strong through iniquity. Man is strong only when he surrenders himself to God to do the divine will. We measure lives in a very imperfect way. We call a man great because of certain spectacular things in connection with him. If a man has large property, or if he does something that looms large in the public eye, we speak about it afterward as a great life. While some other man who lives in a narrow sphere and never serves as a headline in the daily paper, or calls forth the astonishment of men, we call a small man, and we speak of his life as a little life. But God does not measure men in that

way. All lives are little lives looked at from their quantity, in God's view. God judges lives by motives and spirit, and a man in a very narrow sphere, with very limited circumstances for uttering himself, may live in as high and noble a spirit and with a motive as holy as the king in his palace. Look at life from that standpoint and you will see that no life is strong that is not pleasing to God. Have all the money you please, have all the soldiers you wish to back you, have the loftiest position the world can give you, and if at heart you are wrong, and are lifting your hand against God, then you are not a great man, and you have no power to strengthen yourself in your iniquity, and the slightest breath from the throne of God would tumble you down from your eminence to destruction. No man is strong who is not strong in the love and honor of God. As has been truly said by a great preacher, there is only one real and true strength in this universe, and that is God's strength, and no man ever did any strong thing yet that God did not do that strong thing in him. A man makes himself full of strength only as the trumpet at the

lips of the trumpeter makes itself full by letting himself be held in the hand of God. As the brush is powerless to paint a picture by itself, and becomes filled and inspired with genius when it is put into the hands of a Raffael or a Michelangelo, so man, putting himself into the hand of God, loses his ignorance and his weakness and becomes full of the graciousness and power of the infinite God.

My dear friend, if your life has been feeble and weak because it has been selfish, and you have been trying to do your work alone, I implore you to put your life into God's hand and it shall glow with power. You remember what Paul said: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." That may become true of every one of us. Why should a man hesitate to put his life into the hands of the God who made it, and who alone is able to perfectly master it and make it strong and beautiful beyond all his dreams?

If you are ever out on Puget Sound in that young giant State of Washington, you will probably go down to see the Snoqualmie Falls. And a beautiful sight you will see. You will see a splendid river flowing through a deep

channel, plunging two hundred and sixty-eight feet, sheer and clear, down into the cañon. The impression one receives, except in the descending curve at the top of the fall, is not of power, but of beauty and grace associated with gentleness. But after you have looked at the falls, the guide will take you down a deep black shaft, through the flinty basaltic rock, two hundred and seventy feet, to the chamber below. This chamber is a power-room, thirty feet high and fifty feet wide, excavated out of the rock, with a gallery running hundreds of feet till it reaches the air at the bottom of the chasm. In this shaft is set a steel tube eight feet in diameter which is to carry the water down to the motors. At the foot of this tube the water pressure is one hundred and twenty-five pounds to the square inch. The motors are on the principle of two interlocked turnstiles set in a circular steel box. The water can not pass at the sides, nor above nor below; it must turn the turnstiles to get through. Each of these wheels, which I speak of as turnstiles, weighs twenty-four thousand pounds, and they revolve at the speed of three hundred and sixty revolutions a minute.

Now I have painted the picture for you to call your attention to the fact that for thousands of years the Snoqualmie River had been coming down out of the Cascade Mountains and pouring itself in that tremendous cascade into the canon below in absolute wastefulness, doing nothing useful in the world on account of these falls. But a man comes along, a canny Scotchman, who has learned how to master these things, and he lays hold on that splendid stream and by drawing away only a small portion of it, he makes that wasteful prodigal put forth the strength of a hundred thousand horses and drive those huge wheels, weighing twelve tons each, at the incredible velocity of three hundred and sixty revolutions per minute. He takes a little part of that wasteful, frothy beauty and fetters it down in that black cavern and forces it to plant white feet on steps of steel until they exert the energy of a hundred thousand Vulcans. And what is the result of it all? Ah, the energy received from the water turning those great wheels down in that dark cavern is sent along aluminum wires to the cities of Tacoma and Seattle and Everett. It lights a

hundred thousand homes; it illuminates streets and churches; it whirls tens of thousands of people along in the street cars; it welds iron in the shops; it grinds flour in the great mills, and in a hundred ways it ministers to man's comfort and progress.

I would to God we might really catch the truth of this illustration. The most pitiable waste is in humanity. How much of us is going to waste? Ask yourself that question to-night. There is only one Person in the universe that knows so much about your soul that He can take it into His holy hands and conserve all its energy and turn all the force of your being into true and noble channels and make of you the blessing to the world that it is possible for you to be. My brother, I beg you no longer to allow your life to go to waste in sin. Turn it over to God, that He may cleanse it and clothe it with power and use it for His sublime purpose!

A CHAIN OF INFLUENCE

“Make the chain.”—Ezekiel 7 : 23.

THE scholars do not agree as to just what is the significance of this call for a chain on the lips of the prophet. It was a bloody time, the land was full of crimes against God and man. It might mean a cry for a chain with which to fetter those who were arrested by the judgments of God, or it might indicate the chain of events that follow one another like links, making a strong, irresistible chain that holds the sinner to the day of judgment. Whatever it may have meant in its original utterance, it is legitimate for us to find in it a suggestion of the chain of influence by which men may be held to goodness and restrained from evil.

I

First of all I wish to see in our theme the chain of influence which it is possible for us, through right conditions, controlled by love

and reverence, to throw around childhood and youth so that they shall be bound by the heavenly constraint while life shall last. This is a theme upon which it is always impossible for me to talk without emotion. I shall never forget to thank God for the chain that began to be forged in the little log cabin where I was born, and went on, link by link, during my childhood and youth. Oh, the precious links in that chain! The first one of those links was the assurance of the love of my parents. That I never doubted for a moment. I was a tempestuous youth and full of faults that required discipline, but the love that administered it was a golden link in that chain. The next link was the family prayers. Every evening my father took down the Bible that had been six months on the plains in an ox wagon when they pioneered their way to the Northwest. That was a holy book to me in a different way than any other Bible was holy, and every day the good man read from those pages and knelt and prayed by that fireside. It was not an occasional thing on Sunday or holidays; but day after day, through all the years of childhood. That

little prayer-service sanctified the home life, cleansed its atmosphere of petulance and selfishness, and brought our hearts close together, and made God seem near and real. Then there was another link—and what a strong link it was—my mother's secret prayer. Every day she went away to a quiet place and sang and prayed and cried her soul out to God. I never knew her to come back but with songs and a radiant glow on her countenance. It seems to me that if every other link broke in my faith in the power of God to speak to human hearts with comfort and blessing, that link would hold, and so long as I had the memory of the light I have seen on mother's face, coming back from her secret prayer, that chain of faith would abide. Then there was the Christian attitude toward the neighbors. Not only in the daily prayer for them, but in the spirit of brotherly kindness and unselfishness which my father and mother were always ready to show toward them. The generous willingness to share whatever they had with the poorest in the neighborhood was another link that held my boyish heart.

Then I went to school in a Christian college where the president and the professors loved God and sought to serve Him, and believed that the Bible was an essential element in a true education, and did not fail to constantly impress the relation of God to the universe we studied. That was another link in the chain that restrained me. And at last, when I went forth into life, wherever I went, that chain held fast. If I passed a saloon door and other young men were going in, that chain of holy influence blocked my path. Were other people cynical and skeptical about God and about Christ and spiritual things, there was that golden chain stretched between me and their associations and their sneers, and so all my life I have had reason to thank God for a chain that began to be forged in the love with which my father and mother bent over my cradle and gained its links in prayers and faithful discipline and education.

Now, I have recounted these things to stir us all up to help make a chain about the young life of to-day in our homes. In the schools, in our Sunday-schools, among all of our acquaintanceship and relation to child-

hood and youth, let us each one seek to forge our own links in that chain of Divine influence that will hold to righteousness, in all the years to come, the young who come in touch with us.

II

I wish to find also suggested in our theme the possibility of forging a chain of love in the deeds of our daily lives that shall be an abiding influence for good cheer and helpfulness in an ever-widening circle about us. Henry Ward Beecher forged a chain like that which filled all Brooklyn with its beautiful influence. It used to be said that when the Beechers lived on the Heights in Brooklyn, they could always tell when Mr. Beecher was coming home in the evening from the voices and the joyous laughter of the children. All the street urchins, as well as the more well-to-do children in the vicinity, knew him, and would often wait for his coming. When they saw him in the distance, they would run and gather around him, get hold of his hands, get into those large overcoat pockets for the nuts and the good things he so often filled them

with before starting for home, knowing as he did full well whom he would meet. And the children would tug at him to keep him with them as long as they could, he all the time laughing or running as if to get away, but enjoying it more than any of them.

One Decoration Day in Brooklyn, as the great procession was moving into Greenwood Cemetery with its bands of rich music, with its carriages laden with sweet and fragrant flowers, with its waving flags, beautiful in the sunlight, a poor and humble-looking woman, with two companions, by her apparent nervousness attracted the attention of the gate-keeper. He kept her in view for a little while, and presently saw her as she gave something she had partially concealed to one of her companions, who, leaving the procession, went over to the grave of Mr. Beecher, and tenderly laid it there. Reverently she stood for a moment or two, and then, retracing her steps, joined her two companions, who with bowed heads were waiting by the wayside. The gate-keeper went to the grave and found a gold frame, and in it a poem cut from a volume, a singularly beautiful poem through

which was breathed the spirit of love and service and self-devotion to the good and the needs of others. And at one or two places where it fitted, the pen had been drawn across a word and Mr. Beecher's name inserted, which served to give it a still more real, vivid, and tender meaning. At the bottom this only was written, "From a poor Hebrew woman, to the immortal friend of the Hebrews." There was no name, but this was sufficient to tell the whole story—some poor, humble woman, but one out of a mighty number whom he had at some time befriended or helped or cheered, whose burden he had helped to carry, and soon perhaps had forgotten all about it. It was a link in a chain that held him always in love for the poorest and commonest men and women and children, and a link also in a chain which held all who knew him to him with cords stronger than steel. My friends, let us make a chain of love that shall not only make our lives helpful and beautiful, but shall be drawing and restraining toward goodness every one within our reach.

III

I am sure that there are some who ought to find in our theme this evening a call to chain-making on their own account. It ought to arouse you, on this first Sunday evening of the New Year, to forge the first link of your own making in the chain of your personal salvation. There has already been a chain of mercies stretching back to the cross on Calvary, a chain of ten thousand links of mercies and love that has drawn you to God's house to-night and given you the opportunity of hearing His word. But if you are ever to be saved from your sins it must be through you yourself forging, by the help of God, some links in the heavenly chain. There must be that link of repentance which does not simply mean being sorry that you have done wrong; but means, above everything, the turning away from your sins, the ceasing to do wrong and the beginning to do right. Then there must be the link of acceptance of the atonement which Jesus Christ made for you as an all-sufficient salvation from your sins.

Dr. Len Broughton tells the story of a young man during the Civil War, who was in the Southern Army and was wounded in one of the battles fought around Richmond, Virginia. A brother of his, a preacher, was summoned to his bedside, which was thought to be his dying bed. The night after this preacher brother came, he found his wounded brother in great agony, not so much of body as of spirit. He was delirious practically all night, and kept talking about going home. In the morning, near daybreak, he became quiet and sank into a sleep, and when he awoke his mind was clear. As soon as he saw his brother there, he said, "Oh, brother, I have had the hardest fought night I ever had in my life. I have fought all through the night." His brother said, "In battle?" "No," he replied, "not in battle. I was trying to go home to mother, and, on the road, I came to a place where there was straight mountain on one side, straight mountain on the other, and straight mountain in front. There was no way by which I could get around. I would climb up a bit, lose my hold, and fall again; and all the night long

I was climbing and falling until after a while I was so exhausted that I could not climb any more, and I lay at the foot of a hill and, as I lay there, flat on my back, at the foot of the hill, exhausted, I saw something gather over the summit of the hill that looked at first like a cloud; a small cloud to be sure, but it quickly got larger and larger until it covered the whole hill region. Then, from the center of the cloud, I saw something stand out like a Cross, crimson with blood, and then I saw the hill fade away and the road through the hill region was perfectly clear on to home." His brother said, "Do you interpret that dream?" The wounded man replied, "Yes, brother. All my life long I have been trying to climb the mountain of my sin by resolving and resolving to do better and to do better, and all the time I have found that it was but to get so high and fall back. Now I propose, God helping me, to trust in the Cross and let the Cross melt away my sins." And it did. My friends, I do not doubt I speak to some of you who are conscious that you are sinners in the sight of God, and if you had to face death to-night

and the great white throne of judgment, you would be filled with dismay and with terror. I beg you to make a chain from right where you are as a sinner that will link into the chain of God's love which is anchored in the Cross where Jesus Christ died to redeem you. Accept Jesus as your Savior. Lay hold upon Him with links of faith and confidence, and He will blot out your sins, renew your spirit, and hold you by a chain of divine love to the righteous life you have so often desired and yet failed in your own strength to achieve.

THE MAN WHO WAS LEFT

“And I was left.”—Ezekiel 9 : 8.

THE prophet Ezekiel, in one of his wonderful visions, saw six men go forth as the executioners of the righteous judgments of God upon the wicked. Each one of them had a slaughter weapon in his hand and in their midst was a man who was drest not as an executioner, but was clothed in linen, with a writer's ink-horn by his side, and this man was instructed to go forth through the city and set a mark of protection upon every one he found whose heart was set against the iniquity and sin of the people, who sighed for a purer and holier life. And every one upon whom that mark was found was to be spared in that day of judgment. It does not appear that the prophet himself had received this mark of protection, and after recounting the scenes of bloodshed that followed the execution of the divine mandate in his vision, he exclaims, “And I was left,” as with astonishment that such should have been the case.

I think there are in the theme lessons of great interest and helpfulness for ourselves at the present moment. We have just passed through the gates of another year. I noticed in the papers the other day a very striking description of the gates which are now being made in Pittsburg for the Panama Canal. There are to be ninety-two of these gates, and any one of them will be about the height of a six-story building and will be sixty-five feet wide and seven feet thick, and the steel structure of these gates alone will weigh sixty thousand tons, or nearly eight times as much as the Eiffel Tower in Paris. I noticed that the writer describing them emphasized the fact that they were the largest gates in the world. But large as they are, they are small indeed compared to those invisible but irrevocable gates that have shut out the old year from our power. It would be as hard for us to reach back into one day of the last week of the old year and change the happenings of a single hour, as it would to go back into the days of Julius Cæsar and pluck out of it a day of opportunity. The curtain falls, cutting off all that is behind it, day after day and

year after year. Some one writing of the closing of a year on the last day of the old year sings:

“Over the sorrow, and over the bliss,
Over the teardrop, over the kiss,
Over the crimes that blotted and blurred,
Over the wound of an angry word,
Over the deeds in weakness done,
Over the battles lost and won,
Now at the end of the flying year
(Year that to-morrow will not be here),
Over our freedom, over our thralls,
In the dark and the midnight—the curtain falls.

“Over our gain, and over our loss,
Over our crown, and over our cross,
Over the fret of our discontent,
Over the ill that was never meant,
Over the scars of our self-denial,
Over the strength that conquered trial—
Now in the end of the flying year,
Year that to-morrow will not be here,
Quietly final, the prompter calls;
Over it swiftly the curtain falls.

“Over the crowds and the solitudes,
Over our shifting, hurrying moods,
Over the hearths where bright flames leap,
Over the cribs where the babies sleep,
Over the clamor, over the strife,
Over the pageantry of life—
Now in the end of the flying year,
Year that to-morrow will not be here,
Swiftly and surely from starry walls,
Silently downward the curtain falls.”

I

In a very true and important sense every definite period of time, like a year, comes to its end as a judgment day. One great value of marking time is that it brings men often to judgment in their own hearts and minds, and causes reflection, and often brings about resolutions for amendment, and determinations for truer living. It would be well for all of us, before we get too far away from the closed gate, from the dropt curtain of the old year, to ask ourselves the question, "Why am I left?" I was talking with a man the other day, and he spoke of many of his friends and acquaintances who had been recently called away by death, and he remarked, "I can not understand why it is that they should have been taken and I left." It might do us good if each of us should ask that question, "Why am I left?" Most of you are Christian people. Are you going to do better work this year for the Lord? Are you determined to be faithful this year to God? Shall Christ have in you a faithful representative in the home where you live, in the business where

you work, among the men and women who are your social companions? Shall these people who come in contact with you frequently this year see the influence of Jesus Christ on your thinking and on your affections? Has God left you to do better work in the world, to win some stars for your immortal crown, to ripen your character for the eternal harvest? And if that is so, will it be in vain or will it be gloriously justified? Some of you are not Christians. You have had a good many years since you came to know the difference between right and wrong. You heard about Christ tenderly when you were a child, and during all the years since that time, in joy and in sorrow, in the church and in many experiences in your personal life, the still small voice of the Spirit of God has spoken to the conscience in your breast and admonished you. Sometimes you have been almost persuaded; you have stood at the very door of salvation, and then have turned away again to the world. And now the question comes again—"Why am I left?" If you had died last year, as you have lived, consciously refusing God your heart and your service, you

feel that it would not have been well with you; but you have been spared. You are conscious that you have not deserved it. You have rebelled against the known will of your Heavenly Father; you have sinned against God's righteous law. You have been selfishly indifferent to the appeals of the Christ who died to redeem you. If you had died in that state, you feel that you must have been condemned, and yet you have been left. The gates of the old year have closed and you come into the New Year, still with the possibilities of forgiveness and mercy and salvation.

Why have you been left? Perhaps it has been because of the prayers and intercessions of a godly father or mother. There is an interesting story in the Bible which brings out in beautiful colors the mercy and compassion of God in seeking to save the children of those who have been true to Him. It is in the story of one of the kings of Israel, a degenerate son of greater ancestors. Abijam had gone to the bad. He had committed about all the sins that a wicked, godless king was likely to be tempted to indulge in. Yet the inspired writer says, "Nevertheless, for David's sake

did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem." What a touching statement! That was the lamp of mercy. But for David's sake, Abijam would have found it all darkness long before he did. David had been long dead and in heaven, but for the sake of the man who had tried to serve Him with an honest heart, and who, when he went wrong, repented in deep sincerity, God continued to let the lamp of mercy shine on his wicked grandson. And I wonder if there are not some of you who have been spared in your indifference and ingratitude because of the loving prayers of a saintly father, or a holy mother, who, it may be, has long since gone home to heaven! And yet those prayers may be in vain; they were in vain for Abijam. God continued to let that lamp of mercy hang out for the wicked king for years, but Abijam only hardened his heart against the God of his fathers. He seems to have thought that because God did not strike him down at once, He never would. I can hear him saying to himself, or to some of the flattering, drunken courtiers that fawned upon him, "My grandfather David was a great man, no doubt; but

he was old-fashioned, and he was altogether too sensitive about sin. Whenever he found that he had done wrong, he was full of tears and repentance; that was not in good form for a king. I do as I please and I don't see but I am just as well off as he was." And so he sneered and went on sinning against God until his day of judgment came, and he went down into the darkness of eternal night. My friends, if the lamp of mercy, fed by the oil of the prayers of holy grandparents, or of a loving father, or a tender mother, still shines upon your path with rays of hope, do not spurn it or be indifferent to it, but turn about now and follow that light until it leads you home to God. Ask yourself to-night, "Am I left alive in vain? Shall the day of mercy pass away and at last, in a different sense, in a sense that shall fill my soul with terror, shall I be left outside the gate of eternal life?"

II

I think our theme ought to bring us another message to-night. There is another day of judgment coming. The Bible is not more

clear about anything than that the deeds of this life are critical concerning the eternal life. If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that for every one of us there is coming a day of judgment when we shall stand before God and give an account for the deeds done in the body. Who shall be able to stand in that day? The teaching of the Gospel is plain as day that no man will stand there justified except he be marked by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. In Ezekiel's vision, the man with the ink-horn went forth among the people and marked every man and woman and child that sighed for goodness, whose heart was stirred against evil, and when the men with the slaughter weapons saw that mark, they passed by and that soul was protected.

When the children of Israel were to march out of Egypt and Pharaoh hardened his heart, God sent His death angel over all the land of Egypt to slay the first-born in every house. But God told Moses that the Hebrew people should kill a lamb for every family and sprinkle the blood upon the door-posts of the house, and when the death angel came by in the

night, wherever the blood was sprinkled he passed by, and that house was safe, and the first-born was spared. So the day of judgment is coming, and we must stand before God and give an account of our conduct. Who shall be able to stand? Are there any that will be able to stand in their own righteousness and say to God, "I lived all my life in yonder world, steadfast in the truth, perfectly pure and holy, never sinning against the law of love"? Will there be any? I am sure it will not be me. Will it be you? I am sure there is not one of you will dare to look forward to standing before the great white throne with such a statement on your lips. Think of the many times you have rejected the love of Christ and have refused Him your confession, and then remember that it is that same Christ, with the marks of the crown of thorns upon His forehead, with the prints of the nails in His palm, who will sit on that throne of judgment. Ah, the tender light of those eyes of your Savior would blast you into blindness with a lie like that on your lips. No, there will be no one to stand there justified, save those who in repentance for

their sins and through humble faith in Jesus Christ have accepted Him as their Savior and have had His blood sprinkled upon their hearts. They shall be spared; they shall be left to the glory of God forever.

I thank God that we are still left to life and to mercy. I thank God that I may preach to you the glorious Gospel of His love; that I may come in Christ's name and say to you in His own words, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Accept Him now, lest the day come when you shall be left of His mercy and of the opportunity of repentance!

THE PERILS OF THE CITY

“The city is full of wresting of judgment: for they say Jehovah seeth not.”—Ezekiel 9 : 9.

AND is not that the chief peril of the city? The works of man are evident. They roar through the streets in automobiles and cars. They crowd and jostle on the sidewalks, in business and traffic. Man and his work are everywhere in the city. The city peculiarly stands for the glory and achievement of man, but the work of God is thrust aside. The very sky is so full of smoke that many times we can not see the sun at noonday nor the stars at night. So, in the crowd of mankind, in the dust and smoke and noise of man's achievement, God is likely to be forgotten.

In the country we do not see so much of man's work, but we see infinitely more to remind us of the presence of God. Wordsworth was walking in the country, listening to the soft murmuring of mountain streams, and

gazing on the steep and lofty cliffs, and the hedgerows of pastures and fields, when he sang:

And I have felt
A Presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and in the mind of man.

It was the consciousness of God that stirred the heart and mind of Wordsworth. He was not seeking after God, but nature suggested God to him. The mountains in their purple depths and the stars in their glittering hearts brought the consciousness of God to his soul. And who of us has not felt the same thing again and again? How many times I have felt it in the mountains, looking up at the snow-white peaks all about me. And again I have felt it in the forests, walking down the wooded aisles where the great trees rose like Gothic columns, and reminded me of Bryant's thought when he wrote:

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them,—ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back

The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood
 Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down
 And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
 And supplication.

And again he sings:

Thou hast not left
 Thyself without a witness, in these shades,
 Of Thy perfections. Grandeur, strength, and grace
 Are here to speak of Thee. This mighty oak—
 By whose immovable stem I stand and seem
 Almost annihilated—not a prince,
 In all that proud old world beyond the deep,
 Ere wore his crown as loftily as he
 Wears the green coronal of leaves with which
 Thy hand has graced him. Nestled at his root
 Is beauty, such as blooms not in the glare
 Of the broad sun. That delicate forest flower,
 With scented breath, and looks so like a smile,
 Seems, as it issues from the shapeless mold,
 An emanation of the indwelling Life,
 A visible token of the upholding Love,
 That are the soul of this wide universe.

And so it is in the free world outside the town and the city that, through snow and rain and wind and storm, as well as in the budding of springtime and the white and yellow harvest of the summer and the crimson and yellow and bronze glory of the autumn, God is forever speaking to men and making them conscious of Himself. And I

do maintain that the first chief peril of city life to man's moral and spiritual nature comes from the fact that his own work and achievement, by its very din and noise and smoke, is likely to cause him to forget God.

I

Another peril of the city which is likely to cause a wresting of judgment, of which the prophet speaks, comes from the fact that when men and women get together in crowds they lose the keen sense of their personal responsibility to God, and they play upon each other as a violin is played upon by the strings of the bow, and exaggerate in their minds the desirability and importance of worldly amusements and pleasures until the greater values of life are forgotten. There is nothing more pitiful in American life, in many of our great cities, than to see how some of the old families, that a generation or two ago were among our greatest names, and were the backbone of civic life in the cities where they dwelt, have gone utterly to disaster in the new generation through worldly pleasures and dissipation.

A friend of mine in an eastern city told recently the story of three strong families who were easily the first families in the city and State where he grew up. The head of one of these houses was a railroad magnate, the head of another was a wholesale merchant and a banker, and the third was a lumber king. Each one of them lived in a palace. These men were fine types of Christian manhood. First in business, they were philanthropists, and were first in their churches. There is a college named for one of them; there is a hospital named for one of them; there is a church named in honor of one of them. All this was not much more than twenty years ago. The railroad man lived to be very old, and to the end he had the heart of a little child; but when he died at last, he died a bankrupt and with a broken heart. His sons ruined him. One of them is in a lunatic asylum—dissipation brought him there; one of them is dead—his appetite slew him; and the other one ekes out a miserable existence partly on charity and partly on whatever he can find to do. When the lumber king came to die, my friend, who is a minister,

stood at the grave with three splendid-looking sons and two beautiful daughters. One of the daughters is dead. The other daughter's husband has run through her money. And two of the three sons, at least, are known as high-rollers, and are shamefully wasting the money that their father accumulated by the frugality and toil of a long lifetime. The other one, the wholesale merchant and banker, died, leaving to his only son a fortune and splendid reputation and a name treasured far and wide even yet for integrity and noble living, but only a little while ago that name was trailed in the mire of the divorce court to which that young man's fourth wife had brought him. What a record that is, and the terrible thing about it is that it is not so very uncommon. These young people degenerated from the noble physical and mental and moral life of their parents, through the mistaken and exaggerated idea of pleasure. In the rush and turmoil of modern city life they were largely brought up by servants. The fathers were so busy they had little time to look after their sons. The mothers were so busy with their social life that they had little time for

their daughters in dealing with that which was noblest in their lives, and so they grew up in a hothouse existence and were luxurious and idle and soft, and it was pleasure that killed them.

The young people who read of the wild hilarity of the social pleasures of the very rich are often envious and jealous of them, and think what a happy time they must have. But all history and observation prove that the people who live simply for pleasure are the worst cheated people in the world. If you will read the confessions of Tolstoy you will see that for ten years he went from banquet to banquet, drinking rich wines, feasting, following his tailor, concocting flatteries, lies, sleeping by day and dissipating at night, and, he adds, "My observation is, that no galley slave, or apostle like Paul, has to toil as hard as a society man and a society woman," and both have lost their beauty, their happiness, and their health before the life-course is half run.

Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis brilliantly says that pleasure promises a velvet path, air heavy with roses, the wine and nectar of Venus and Bacchus. Pleasure promises per-

fumed bowers, days of happiness, nights of laughter and song. But pleasure is a deceiver. Sensualism is sweet in the mouth but bitter in the digestion. The epicurean begins to live for the appetite and ends with keen torture of the stomach that can not digest gruel. The youth begins by mixing laughter with his wine, and ends with nerves broken, limbs twisted, face hideous with disease and anguish. In the days of the Inquisition, cruel men deceived the prisoner, as pleasure and sensualism deceive the young now. With soft words the jailer promised the prisoner release on the morrow. When the appointed hour came he opened the door and pointed down the corridor, and oh, joy of joys! yonder was the greensward, cool with grass and gay with tulips and crimson flowers. With a shout of joy the prisoner ran forward to cast himself upon the cool ground, but lo! it was a mockery, a delusion, a lying deceit. What afar off seemed grass was really sheet iron painted in the similitude of verdure. What looked like red tulips and crimson flowers was iron, beaten into the similitude of blossoms and heated red hot by flames underneath.

Where coolness was promised, scorching was given. The vista promised pleasure; it gave pain. And when a man or a woman looks from afar off upon a worldly life, with all its pleasures of appetite and physical sense, it wears a brilliant aspect and a crimson hue, but near at hand the scene changes, the honey is bitter, and all the fountains of peace are poisoned.

Pleasure is God-given, do not doubt that, but it is never given as the end of living. It is God's reward of merit. It rises like fragrance from a flower on the doing of duty. It fills the soul with gladness in lifting burdens from the shoulders of the weak. Only they know true pleasure who give themselves with whole-hearted purpose to do the work God has given them to do. To them God gives pleasure as He gives beauty to the waterfall or fragrance to the violet-clad hillside or to the meadow dotted with lilies.

II

Another peril of the city is that the dwellers in cities are under constant temptation to become feverish about money and physical suc-

cess and to undervalue simple goodness and genuine integrity. The great wealth is lodged in the city. The great railroad headquarters are in the city. The great centers of money naturally are in the city, and it is in the city where the feverish race for money is keenest. It is in the city that we see what money does—in the towering skyscraper buildings, in the splendid mansions in which rich people live, in the carriages and chariots with which they go forth to their pleasures. Rome in her proudest, most wasteful days never made such display of wealth as is seen to-day in modern cities. Now there is nothing in this world so likely to wrest the judgment, to use the quaint but striking language of the text, as the hot pursuit of money. It does not make much difference whether a man gets the money or not; it is the “love of money,” the hot fever after money, the nose keen to the trail for money, that wrests the judgment and blinds men and women so that they lose their souls in the mad search. Dr. Jowett was preaching not long ago on the text, “The god of this world hath blinded their minds,” and he called his sermon “Blinded by gold-dust!”

He brings out in that discourse that worldliness is life without ideals, life without moral vision, life without poetic insight. Worldliness is imprisonment within the material. And that is the peril of the city—that material things crowd us on every side until the conscience is lulled to sleep and we become heedless about God. As our text says, men come to feel that “God seeth not.” We need to watch ourselves that we do not allow the sensitive moral nature to be deadened and conscience to be silenced. One of the fatal things about the city is that there is so little time to muse and meditate that imagination becomes inoperative and the spiritual instinct becomes coarsened and the inner eye ceases to be conscious of God’s presence. The god of this world, so regnant in the bank, in the store, in the political caucus, and in the business whirl of the city, plugs the eyes so that men can not see.

III

Another great peril of the city is that in it we are peculiarly tempted to extravagance; to envy and jealousy and foolish competitions.

So much of our life in the city is superficial, so many people are all the while on dress parade and think of life only as a show forever on exhibition. If I may go back to William Wordsworth again and quote lines written more than a hundred years ago, you will see that they apply accurately to this peril of our modern cities:

O friend, I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being as I am opprest
To think that now our life is only drest
For show: mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,
Or groom! We must run glittering, like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest!
The wealthiest man among us is the best!
No grandeur now in Nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense—
This is idolatry, and these we adore.
Plain living and high thinking are no more—
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone—our peace, our simple innocence,
And pure religion, breathing household laws.

Dr. Donald Mackay said a few years ago, speaking of the perilous life of New York City, that there can be no life of worthy thought where existence is loaded down with the vulgarities of luxury. Thought, which is the life of the soul, not only deteriorates, it dies, when we make the cares of the body the

be-all and the end-all of our days. And he declares that the two most illiterate classes in society to-day are the abject poor, who by necessity must think of the needs of the body, and, therefore, can think of nothing else; and the idle rich, who by choice devote their hours to the trivial problem of what they shall eat and what they shall drink and wherewithal they shall be clothed.

But the most serious peril is that the great middle class of men and women, who belong neither to the abject poor nor the idle rich, but are the great army of wage-earners and moderately well-to-do business people in city life, are under the constant strain of temptation to live beyond their means and to give themselves up to vulgar competition in making a display that will surpass their neighbors.

“The body it is,” said Bossuet, the great French preacher, “which drags us down from the loftier levels of thought, which chains us to the earth, when we ought to be breathing the pure air of heaven.” So it is that to-day vulgar ambition everywhere in the cities is to “go one better” in the matter of functions and entertainments. Too often, under this

spur of ruthless competition, home life is deliberately and often criminally sacrificed for a show of social life, and social life becomes the vestibule through which the family passes into the prison house of debt, and on and on a dark road that oftentimes ends in shame and disaster.

My dear friends, I have spoken thus seriously of the dangers of the city because my heart is made to bleed many, many times at the skeletons that are brought to me by broken-hearted men and women. Now the fact is that human nature is the same in the city as in the country, and the ten commandments are just as binding in the city as on the farm. The great elemental truths of the human soul are the same here as there. And there is no place in the world that man needs so deeply to live every day with a consciousness of the presence of God, and to be in such relation to Him that prayer springs spontaneously from a trusting heart to his lips, as in the city. There is no place where home life is so important as in the crowded city. Where temptations are abundant without and appeal to young life on every side, our homes

should be kept very beautiful with reverence toward God, and love toward each other, and sympathy for all mankind. In such a home life is the true antidote and the surest defense against the temptations of the street. Our churches, too, in the city, should be fortresses of righteousness, but they should also be hospices of rescue and love, going out into all the community round about with tenderness and welcome for those who lack the homes that make our lives secure.

The best way to be safe from the peril of the city is to give yourself completely to the service of God and the fellowship of Jesus Christ in making the city safe for some one else. The positive life that is full of helpfulness will know the blessing which Paul had in mind when he said, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

THE MAN WITH FOUR FACES

“And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.”—Ezek. 10 : 14.

THIS text strongly suggests the many-sided character of ideal manhood. John Ruskin, in his “Love’s Meinie,” describes the Phalerope, a strange bird living out of the way of human beings, in the polar regions of Greenland, Norway, and Lapland, which he calls, “The Arctic Fairy.” It is a central type of all bird power, but with elf gifts added; it flies like a lark, trips on water-lily leaves like a fairy, swims like a duck, and roves like a sea-gull, having been seen sixty miles from land; and finally, tho living chiefly in Lapland and Iceland, it has been seen serenely swimming in the hot water of the geysers in which a man could not bear his hand. As this bird is the central type of all bird power, so in Ezekiel’s vision there is pictured a central type of what man may be under the inspiration and aid of the Spirit of God.

I

We have first portrayed to us in this possible man the thoughtful, contemplative, worshipful man. This we have suggested in the face of the cherub. I follow John Milton's lead, who in his poem, "*Il Penseroso*," sings:

"But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne
The cherub Contemplation."

This worshipful face suggests the true dignity and nobility of human nature. After the lecture in the dissecting-room of a great medical college one day, a student, usually all vivacity and chatter, was observed by his friend to be very thoughtful and silent. Asked why, the young man replied, "A curious thing happened in the laboratory to-day. Pointing to the body on which we were working, the professor suddenly said, 'Gentlemen, that was once tenanted by an immortal soul.'" The young student had never before thought in that manner about the body he was dissecting, and it startled him with its tremendous significance. And if we should

walk out on the street to-morrow and consciously realize that every man, woman, and little child whom we meet is an immortal soul of infinite value to God, I am sure it would startle us into a nobler idea of the value of manhood.

We need to be thus startled ever and again, or we lose the highest conceptions of the capacity of man. Dr. Hillis says that the round of monotonous tasks causes men to come to feel that life is one huge stone-pile, that all work is drudgery, and they fall into dull and sullen moods. To get on and possess things alone seems worth while; men come to live to the eye and the ear and the hand, through food and clothes and money alone. Slowly a dark shadow creeps over the face of the sun itself, and one by one a man loses his ideals of life. After a while he comes to be able to sneer at ideals. A little later bitterness begins to tinge his spirit, and at last a man, who was made to live with his feet on the earth but his face toward the heavens, going singing across the years, becomes heavy, inert, scornful, faithless. But it is the glory of our charter in our creation as the sons of God

that God does not leave us to go on in such deterioration without making appeals to us. God comes to us sometimes through joy unexpected, or sorrow with its surprizes, and makes overtures to our souls. And there is no man among us who has not had his hours when lands, offices, and earthly honors dissolved like mists, and we saw clearly that the riches of the soul as the true, reverent son of God was the one thing worth while in our lives.

The men and women who live in that spirit all the time become beautiful and glorious in their influence upon life about them. The presence of God in the man or the woman gives the worshipful face that is divine in its helpfulness in human associations. I have read recently the story of a mother in New England, who never saw a railroad or telegraph or steamship; who never saw a college, and was always poor and pinched with need, but she put her eleven children through a good university, saw one of them sent to the United States Senate, another chosen governor of the State in which she lived, another an honored judge,

another a trusted banker, and all of them respectable and influential citizens. It was the worshipful soul of the woman that made her a masterful personality and was at the same time divine in its graciousness.

“As a rare perfume in a vase of clay
Pervades it with a sweetness not its own,
So, when thou dwellest in a mortal soul,
All heaven’s own sweetness seems around it thrown.”

It is this deep current in religion which we need in this active, earnest time. We do not need men so much to turn away from business to religion, but we want men in every department of business life who are dominated by true spiritual character and who have the thoughtful and reverent face. A young man in Chicago said to a distinguished minister, “I have decided to follow Christ wholly, and consequently I have given up painting.” He was a promising artist. But the wise minister said to him, “You have no right to rob Christ of a gift God bestowed upon you in your creation; get out your palette, bring back your brushes, mix your colors in the light of the heavenly vision, and fling a picture on the canvas for the sake of Christ. All

you have belongs to Him. He who emptied heaven to redeem you asks but a little thing when He asks that in this holy partnership you should empty your whole life out in sacrificial service for Him." What we need above everything to-day is men and women who, in business and professional life, will consecrate themselves to win the earth for Jesus Christ.

II

The second face in the vision we are studying was the face of a man. I think this should suggest to us the humanities, the face of brotherhood, the human, red-blooded kinship face which makes us look upon our brothers' need as if it were our own. And there is nothing that gives me so much hope of the final redemption of man, aside from the infinite power of God, as the capacity which man shows, even among the coarse and evil, for this brotherly humanness. There is so much more of it in men than we believe. Jacob Riis, who knows the underlife of New York City as no one else does, tells of a family of thieves. One of them was consumptive and

was slowly dying. He committed a crime and the police were after him. In order to screen him and let him stay at home with his mother, his brother, who was innocent, allowed himself to be taken, and quietly accepted a sentence of nineteen years' imprisonment in his stead. When the younger man at length died, some one urged the convict to tell the whole story, but he replied, "No, it would only make mother sorry." Now I tell you that a poor thief who could do that and did do that, has in him the capacity for the noblest saintship and the sublimest heroism known to men. Jesus Christ knew what He was doing when He gave Himself as a ransom for a race of lost sinners. Man has the capacity for the noblest brotherhood that can be conceived. And it is this humanity, this face of the man, that we need to emphasize to ourselves these days.

There is a beautiful legend which tells of three maidens who were loitering along the banks of a silvery stream. One held in her hand a bunch of blue violets; another a bunch of ripe strawberries; the third held the tips of her fingers in the stream. An old woman

came along, leaning on a staff, asking alms. The three maidens refused her. A maiden down the stream, not so well clad, dropt a penny into her hand with a kind word, and she vanished. She appeared again in the form of a fairy and found them disputing as to which had the most beautiful hands. And the fairy said: "I see you are in a dispute as to which has the most beautiful hands. Hold up your hands; I will settle the dispute." They did so, and she said: "It is not the hand that is fragrant with the odor of blue violets; it is not the hand that is crimson with strawberries; nor is it the hand washed white in the silvery stream that is most beautiful." Then, casting her eye down the stream to the maiden not so well clad, who had given her the penny, she said: ("It is the hand that helps others that is the most beautiful.") And so it is the human face full of sympathy and brotherhood that is most like the Christ.

There is another thought, however, in this face of the man, which needs to be emphasized—that it suggests a man's adaptation of himself to the duty in hand. God has given us this wonderful treasure of the Gospel in

earthen vessels. No angel could come and take our place and preach this Gospel as we can preach it, if we are mastered by sympathy and love, to the people with whom we are associated. And we must use our position as father or mother or employer or friend or comrade in order that we may bring Christ to the hearts of those near to us.

The Rev. W. E. Cousins has written a book called "Madagascar of To-Day." In this book he tells how at one time the Queen of that island became uneasy about the growing influence of foreign ideas, and wished to get rid of the missionaries. She sent some officers to carry her message. The missionaries were gathered together to meet the queen's messengers, and were told that they had been a long time in the country and had taught much, but that it was now time for them to think of returning to their native land. The missionaries, alarmed at this message, answered that they had only begun to teach some of the elements of knowledge and that much remained to be imparted. They mentioned several branches of education, among which were the Greek and Hebrew languages,

which had already been partially taught to some. The messengers returned to the queen, and soon came back with this answer: "The queen does not care much for Greek and Hebrew. Can you teach something more useful? Can you, for example, teach how to make soap?"

"Give me a week," said the leading missionary, and the week was given. At its close the queen's messengers again met the missionaries, who were able to present to them a bar of fairly good white soap, made entirely from materials found in the country. This was an eminently satisfactory answer, and the manufacture of soap was forthwith introduced. As a result of making this bar of soap, the missionaries gained a respite which gave them time to win the people to Christ. My friends, we must use every power of our humanity for the glory of God and the uplift of our brothers.

III

The third face was the face of a lion. The lion is used everywhere in the Scripture to suggest courage, and the ideal manhood must

always be a courageous manhood. Sincere Christian manhood must, in the very nature of things, be brave, for its reliance is upon God.

During the Spanish-American War, when there was great terror along the Atlantic Coast for fear Boston would be destroyed by the Spanish fleet, one brave, self-composed man said, "They can not destroy Boston; Boston is a state of mind." Courage is a state of mind. Isaiah says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." Emerson said, "Hitch your wagon to a star." Thus you will share its travels; and the soul that attaches itself to God shares His strength and His peace.

The man who stands like a lion for what he is sure is right can well afford, even for this world, to pay little attention to the passing flurry of abuse or opposition. When James Russell Lowell delivered his Commemoration Ode on the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Harvard College, Grover Cleveland, then President of the United States, and who was standing bold as a lion against bitter abuse and opposition within and without his

party, sat a few feet before him. Mr. Lowell expressed a sense of honor at the presence of the President of the United States, and with wonderful fitness added that in the perils and toils of his high office, he could offer the prayer of the Greek sailor, when his boat was driven on the tempestuous and stormy sea: "O Neptune, you may save me if you will; you may sink me if you will; but, whatever happens, I shall keep my rudder true." And Mr. Cleveland lived to have his courage and nobility of purpose universally honored. It is this face of the lion, boldly standing for righteousness, that helps on the cause of Christ. It was when the people saw "the boldness of Peter and John," that great attention was attracted to Christ and His Gospel.

IV

And then we have the face of the eagle. There can be no doubt what this means. The eagle is a bird of the upper air. It is not in the marsh or the meadow or the lowlands where he seeks his nesting-place; but high on some jutting point of rocks, hanging over a

precipice beyond the reach of human feet or the claws of wild beasts, in some cave of the granite wall, you will find his nest. Or on some lofty hill-top, in the deep forests, where a great tree rises a hundred feet without a limb, in that giant tree-crown you may find the home of the eagle. And the eagle is a bird who loves the realm of the sky; he loves to soar far above the earth. He seems to be the only living thing in all God's creation that is able to look unblinking in the face of the sun. Undazzled, he lifts himself on his strong wing and soars in the heavens, sweeping ever upward till, lost to human vision, he seems to have lost himself in that realm of light that beats about the sun itself. It is to this that man is compared. Not only the worshipful face, not only the face of human brotherhood, not only the face as courageous and bold as a lion, but the ideal man is to have the face of the eagle, always with his eye turned heavenward, forever progressing, forever advancing, hoping, expecting, every day for something better still. This is man's glorious privilege.

Onward, ever onward, is the spirit of true manhood and womanhood. Columbus, har-

assed by the mutiny of his crew, but still persevering, is an illustration of the adventurous soul who refuses to be hindered by the scruples of the timid and the prejudices of those who would hold man back from his noblest achievement. Joaquin Miller, the poet of the Sierras, puts the thought in a most graphic picture:

“Behind him lay the gray Azores,
Behind, the gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said, ‘Now must we pray,
For lo! the very stars are gone;
Brave admiral, speak; what shall I say?’
‘Why, say, “Sail on, sail on, sail on!”’

“My men grow mutinous day by day;
My men grow ghastly wan and weak.’
The stout mate thought of home; a spray
Of salt wave washed his swarthy cheek.
‘What shall I speak, brave admiral, say,
If we sight naught but seas at dawn?’
‘Why, you shall say at break of day,
“Sail on, sail on, sail on, and on.”’

“They sailed and sailed as winds might blow,
Until at last the scared mate said,
‘Why, now not even God would know
If I and all my men fall dead;

These very winds forget their way,
For God from these dread seas is gone.
Now speak, brave admiral; speak, and say.'—
He said, 'Sail on, sail on, and on.'

"They sailed and sailed. Then spake the mate:
'This mad sea shows its teeth to-night.
He curls his lip, and lies in wait,
With lifted face as if to bite;
Brave admiral, say but one good word.
What shall we do when hope is gone?'
The words leaped as a leaping sword:
'Sail on, sail on, sail on, and on.'

"Then pale and worn, he kept his deck,
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night
Of all dark nights! and then a speck—
A light, a light, a light, a light!
It grew: a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world! He gave that world
Its greatest watchword, 'On! and on!'"

THE TRAVELER'S SANCTUARY

"Yet will I be to them a sanctuary . . . in the countries where they are come."—Ezekiel 11 : 16.

OUR text is one of those great promises of God which shine out in the Bible like great lights along a dark street and tell us of the infinite love and mercy of our Heavenly Father. The people referred to in the text were to be scattered abroad throughout the world because of their sins and rebellion. They were to be exiled travelers in strange lands, often lonely and homesick, knowing not where they were to go, meeting opposition and prejudice as foreigners among strangers. But God says that He will be to them again and again as a sanctuary along the troubled way of their lives.

It is a broader view that I wish to take to-night. I desire to see in our text a picture of life as a whole. No figure used to describe human life is so easy for us to understand as when we view it as a journey. We are all

travelers, whether we will or no. Sometimes we think of life as the traveler and we as the stationary observers by the wayside; but it all has the same effect. The journey goes on and we with it. Many of you have had the experience of one of those moving sidewalks where the passenger simply takes his seat, perhaps conversing with a friend, or reading his book, and ere long he is half a mile away without noting that he is traveling. So the years are bringing us on our journey. Some one sings with graphic force of "The March of the Years":

"Do you hear the rhythmic beat
Of the firm and forward feet
Of the years?
White with frost and red with heat,
Charged with gifts to all they meet,
In desolate wood, in crowded street,
March the years.

"You may watch them as they go
Through life's stages, while they grow
Into night.
First is spring's imperial glow;
Next is summer's flush and flow;
Lastly age and winter's snow,
And long night.

“Steady, regular, their pace,
Every movement full of **grace**,
March the years.
Yet he runs a breathless race,
And his forces he must brace,
Who keeps step by step through space
With these years.

“They are charged with gifts for man;
Let him wrest the best he can
From the mass.
Shadow, substance, deed and plan,
Honors, gold, dreams, talisman,
You may seize, but for a span,
As they pass.

“They can heal your heart—or break;
They can wake your thirst—or slake;
Smiles or tears
They can give, and you must take.
Yet they come for love’s own sake,
And true servants you can make
Of these years.”

In the olden times a sanctuary was a place of refuge. Churches and abbeys and temples and altars were used as places of sanctuary to which men fled when in danger of their lives. So God assures us that tho we be exiled and lonely travelers on the earth, like strangers in a foreign land, He will be to us

a sanctuary of refuge. I think it will be a comfort and an inspiration to us to notice some of these sanctuaries which God provides along the way of life to save us from loneliness and homesickness and despair.

I

One of these divine sanctuaries is the friendship and love which God gives us with faithful and loyal hearts. Percy Ainsworth, one of the most brilliant and saintly of the young Wesleyan preachers, who was called away from earth a little while ago, just as his life was expanding into full beauty and power, wrote a little poem entitled "The Road," in which he glorifies the sanctuary of love which God gave him as a traveling sanctuary of refuge in the person of his wife. He sings:

"Stand with me, near my side,
High on the breast of the hill,
Here where the view is wide,
Here where the air is still.
How can I understand
This silence, these leagues of light,
Save as I hold your hand,
You, who are half my sight?"

“Stand with me, closer yet,
Low in the mist of the vale,
Here where I might forget,
Here where my hope might fall.
How can my heart rejoice,
How can I wait and be strong,
Save as I hear your voice,
You, who are all my song?

“Lean on me all the way,
Where the road winds long and white,
'Neath the sun of love by day,
And the stars of peace by night,
High where the hillside sings,
Low where the vale is trod,
Out to the verge of things,
Up to the feet of God.”

This thought of love, with its faith and confidence, as a sanctuary in every emergency of life, is the sweetest assurance which Christ gives us concerning our human journey. When He gave His disciples their great command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, He coupled with it the tender promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The earthly life of Jesus, with its wealth of incident and story, revealing the beauty and tenderness of His friendship and love, brings

God very close to us as a sanctuary. I have seen a quaint little story of a child who one day asked his mother: "Has any one seen God?" His mother said: "No." The child then concluded, with a wisdom beyond his years: "If no one has seen God, I will content myself with Jesus." Vaguely, no doubt, that little boy felt that Jesus was the way in which God must have looked to the people who saw Him during the years of His human life. Jesus shows us what God is like in character and spirit, and in the atmosphere of life. Christ revealed to us a human life so shot through and through with the radiance of heaven that we see God in Him, and it brings God close to us, and in that friendship and fellowship we may find blest sanctuary.

II

God has opened to us a sure sanctuary in prayer. Wherever we are, no matter how lonely, or how far exiled from comfortable surroundings, the sanctuary of prayer is always close at hand. I was reading recently a story of Washington Allston, one of our

early American poets who was still more famous as an artist. Allston was once in desperate poverty in London, where he had gone to pursue his profession as an artist. He was driven almost to despair by the financial straits in which he found himself. It seemed for a while there was nothing open when the hope was suddenly forced upon him that God could and would help him, if he would ask. He locked the door, fell upon his knees, and cried to the Lord for help, and while he was praying, he was aroused by a knock. He opened the door and met a British nobleman, a stranger to himself, who had come to inquire about the artist's painting of "The Angel Uriel," which he purchased, before leaving the room, for two thousand dollars. That occasion marked the conversion of Washington Allston. It was for him the new birth of faith and hope in God. To the day of his death he regarded it as a direct interposition of God in behalf of a needy, suffering man, and during the rest of his life he was a devout and earnest Christian. It is easy to sneer at such an incident, as it is to sneer at all good things; but to Washington

Allston it was a sanctuary which God opened up to him in his dire need.

Prayer is a sanctuary where we always may be sure to find strength to bear the burdens of life. It is not a brave nor a noble thing for us to get rid of the burdens which truly belong to us or which opportunity has given us to help carry for others. But these loads are often too heavy for our strength unaided, and at such a time it is our duty and privilege to turn to God, and in the sanctuary of prayer seek the help which our Heavenly Father will never fail to give us. He may not take away the load, but He will do what is better, give us the strength to carry it. I was reading not long ago the story of a man who was writing of his own boyhood, and he related the incident, how, one stormy winter day, when the snow lay deep on the field and the old zigzag fences were cracking with the frost, the father, with the help of the boy, had finished an afternoon's work at the barn. One more task only remained to be done: the big wood-box must be heaped up with fuel for the long winter evening and for the morrow. On the particular evening in question the boy had

carried the wood into the house as the father chopped it, load after load, till the last one had been reached, which, boy fashion, was the biggest of all. He had started toward the door with this load, his knees aching, his fingers numb with cold, and his arms seeming ready to pull out from the backbone, when the father came up behind him. The boy thought he would take the load from him; but, instead of that, he took the boy up in his arms, just as he was, load and all, and thus he took him into the house where the children were playing on the floor in the light of the fire. Thus it is that often a mightier Father comes to those whose hearts go out to Him, upon whom He has placed a burden of great work, not to make their load less, but to give them more support.

III

God gives a beautiful sanctuary at the end of life's journey—a sanctuary from fear and dread. When President Garfield was lying wounded and ill in a cottage on the New Jersey shore, with the whole nation thinking of him, he caught, one day, a soft, sweet

melody, which was wafted into his chamber. "What is it?" asked Dr. Bliss, his physician, who was alone with him at the time. "It is Crete," said Garfield, referring to his wife, whose name was Lucretia. "Open the door, please," asked the sick man. As the door swung open the subdued tones of Mrs. Garfield's voice were heard as she sang the old hymn, "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah." "Listen," said the President, as she sang the last verse:

"When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Bear me through the swelling current;
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Sings of praises
I will ever give to thee."

"Glorious, isn't it, Bliss?" said Garfield. Even then the noble sufferer was near "the verge of Jordan," and the Christian faith of the singer and the listener was a sanctuary for them both. When I see a good man die, see him go forth into the other world with a smile on his lips and noble courage in his heart, I think how glorious it is for a man, by the grace of God, to go toward the sunset

of life and toward the eternal world in the brave spirit of a traveler, instead of like driftwood carried by a current, that can not help itself. The true Christian comes to death in the spirit that Clinton Scollard sings of the departure of his friend:

“Into the dusk and snow
One fared on yesterday;
No man of us may know
By what mysterious way.

“He had been comrade long;
We fain would hold him still;
But, tho our will be strong,
There is a stronger Will.

“Beyond the solemn night
He will find morning-dream,
The summer’s kindly light
Beyond the snow’s chill gleam.

“The clear, unfaltering eye,
The inalienable soul,
The calm, high energy—
They will not fail the goal!

“Large will be our content
If it be ours to go
One day the path he went
Into the dusk and snow!”

IV

There is one other sanctuary for human travelers about which I want to speak to you this evening, and it is a message which I feel sure some of you ought to hear. The sanctuary to which I refer is the mercy-seat to which God invites a sinning soul. It also is a movable sanctuary. Right where you are, even as I speak, you may, if you will, enter into it through faith in Jesus Christ, and by breathing out the prayer of your soul in confession of your sins and in asking for pardon, you may find the refuge which God has provided in the Cross of Christ.

Do you know, I think there are a good many people these days who greatly desire to be out-and-out Christians, and yet are failing to find the way into the kingdom of God through lack of a definite confession of sin and a straightforward obedience to Christ in confessing Him. A friend of mine who is a Presbyterian minister in an eastern city, a few weeks ago told this story. Some years since he brought into his household an orphan boy about twelve years of age. The boy's

father and mother had been early friends of his. Brought up on a farm, the boy had never seen a city. During the months that followed, a strong attachment developed between the boy and the man. The boy never seemed so happy as when in the minister's company. He would sit by the hour and talk over his studies, and his pleasures and ambitions for the future. But one day the minister thought he detected a change in the boy. He endeavored to dismiss the suspicion from his mind, but it persisted. There could be no doubt about it—something had disturbed their tender relations. Naturally enough, in seeking an explanation, he sent his memory back over the path of the yesterdays in search of some blunder or oversight upon his part, but could recall nothing that would furnish an explanation of the boy's behavior. After assuring himself that he had not changed in his attitude toward the boy, he began, as tactfully as possible, to study the lad. Whenever the minister talked with him, the boy's eyes sought the ground; when he took him out walking, he lagged behind; when he invited him to bring his books into the study

(which had been his former delight), he excused himself, and finally, for various reasons, he often failed to join him at mealtime. At his wits' end, the minister finally sought out his school-teacher, who informed him that the boy had been very naughty. After finding out all the facts, he called the boy into his study. At first he would not enter, but stood with his foot in the crack of the door, thus preparing himself for a hasty retreat should occasion demand. But the minister reassured him by saying that he need have no fear of him, since he should always remain his true and kind friend. When they were seated opposite each other, the man asked if he had been unkind to him at any time. Had he denied him any legitimate pleasure? Had he overlooked his needs? Was he feeling well? Then he closed in upon him with leading questions, and little by little he drew forth the confession, and then the tears, and then a perfect storm of repentance which broke the man up quite as much as it did the boy. But when it was all over and the full confession was made to the minister, and reparation made to the teacher, in the shape of a

note of apology, the clouds broke, and through the stars they could both see the sunshine. Immediately the boy was himself again, and they were upon the same terms of intimacy as before.

Now, my friend the minister says that as the boy sat before him that evening, giving him sentence by sentence the story of his guilt, which he already knew, he thought he understood as never before the great importance of a confession of one's sins to Christ and public acknowledgment of Him as a Savior. Christ yearns to have you draw near to Him, but as long as you excuse yourself from the confession which must be made before forgiveness is granted, there will remain between you a wide gulf of separation. Come to Him now!

THE WALLS OF CHARACTER

“When one buildeth up a wall, behold, they daub it with untempered mortar: say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall.”—Ezekiel 13 : 10, 11.

THE wall to which Ezekiel alludes was no doubt one of the cob walls in the East, daubed with bad mortar, which had not been well tempered—that is to say, not well mixt with the straw which they used to make it substantial and hold it together. This poor quality of mortar, when the rain comes, soon gives way, the whole wall softens and melts, and it goes down in a collapse. The prophet, however, was using this only as a figure to convey a most tremendous truth. He was speaking of their national life and their attitude toward God and righteousness. He was telling them that the day would come when their walls of character as a people should be tried, not only by showers, but by storms of hail and by bitter winds of wrath, and in that day only righteous character would stand the tempest,

and both the walls and the people who had tempered them with this poor mortar would go down in disaster.

We have here suggested a theme of unusual picturesqueness, applicable to ourselves. We, too, are building lives and characters that will be tested by storms of trial and temptation, and everything depends on the quality of our building. We are often deceived into thinking that the goods we are able to gather by our skill and toil, the position we are able to reach before our fellow men, or the learning we are able to conquer, is the thing that will abide. But it is not so. The real walls of life that stand the storm are the true qualities of goodness and genuine righteousness. Henry Drummond once said that he had traveled all over the world, and the finest thing he had ever seen was a good man. What do you mean by a good man? A good man, according to the Christian standard, is a man who, amid all the temptations and seductions of this earthly life, is trying to live up to the highest that he knows; a man who has the fear of God before him, and who knows no other fear; the man who tramples

on his lower nature and asserts the sovereignty of the soul over the body; the man who would never descend to a mean action or soil his lips with foul language or stain his hands with ill-gotten or unholy gains; the man who believes that the great thing is to be right; who would rather lose his popularity and his money than his integrity; the man who carries about with him a tender and a loving heart, and who does what he can to make the world better and sweeter for those who are coming after him. I take it that this is Christ's ideal of a good man, and if we are trying to patch up the walls of life with a cheaper material than that, we are using untempered mortar that some day will come down in the storm.

I

Our theme suggests the pitiable weakness of a sinful life. By a sinful life I do not mean necessarily a drunkard or a thief or a libertine or a scoundrel whose sins shame and disgrace him before the eyes of men. I mean a life that is not essentially genuine in its goodness, in its sincere obedience to God, and its en-

deavor to do its best according to the light God gives the soul. I think one of the most pitiful things is the way men deceive themselves by plastering up the walls of life with their patches of untempered mortar so as to make them look a little better before others. I would to God that we could see ourselves as clearly as we see others. There is no greater blessing to a man than to be able to see himself in the clear light of truth. Laura Richards gives a little allegory about a man who was complaining of his neighbors. "I never saw such a wretched set of people," he said, "as are in this village. They are mean, greedy of gain, selfish, and careless of the needs of others. Worst of all, they are forever speaking evil of one another." "Is it really so?" asked an angel who happened to be walking with him. "It is, indeed," said the man. "Why, only look at this fellow coming toward us! I know his face, tho I can not just remember his name. See his little, shark-like, cruel eyes, darting here and there like a ferret's, and the lines of covetousness about his mouth! The very droop of his shoulders is mean and cringing, and he

slinks along instead of walking.” “It is very clever of you to see all this,” said the angel, “but there is one thing which you did not perceive.” “What is that?” asked the man. “Why, that it is a looking-glass we are approaching,” said the angel. Oh, if we could only look in the looking-glass of God’s Word with undazzled eyes, and see ourselves, and honestly seek regeneration of character, instead of patching it up or plastering it over by worldly makeshifts, how infinitely better it would be for us.

Men’s very successes often mark the measure of their weakness and their failure. A man forgets God and his duty to his spiritual nature and his fellow men, and gives himself over to greed, and makes what the world calls success, and after a while in the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar he looks around complacently and says: “Is not this great Babylon which I have built?” He credits his prosperity to the skill of his own brain, and the sinew of his own arm; and as he boasts, he loses his own soul. Some one writes:

I knew a youth of large and lofty soul,
A soul aflame with heavenly purpose high.
Like a young eagle's, his clear, earnest eye,
Fixt on the sun, could choose no lesser goal.
For truth he lived; and love, a burning coal
From God's high altar, did the fire supply
That flushed his cheeks as morning tints the sky,
And kept him pure by its divine control.
Lately I saw him, smooth and prosperous,
Of portly presence and distinguished air.
The cynic's smile of self-content was there,
The very air about him breathed success,
Yet by the eyes of love, too plainly seen,
Appeared the wreck of what he might have been.

The poet has here described the life-story of many people. Their prosperity led them to forget God and their walls are built up with untempered mortar that must finally come down in ruin.

Some of you are very self-complacent, altho you know that in no true and real sense of the word are you Christians. You were brought up in Christian homes and you have been so hedged about by the influences of Christian life that you have been kept back from out-breaking sin. But you lack that crowning grace that makes for salvation. You have not obeyed God; you have not confessed Christ as your Savior; you have not accepted

the sacrifice of Jesus as your definite atonement for sin. This touch of obedience to God, which would transform your life and make you a new creature in Christ Jesus, you lack, and if you continue to lack that, the end must be that your life and character will be a failure. It is told of Brullof, the famous Russian painter, who lived in the first half of the last century, that one day he corrected a pupil's study. When the pupil looked at the altered drawing, he exclaimed, "Why, you only touched it a tiny bit, but it is quite another thing." Brullof replied, "Art begins where the tiny bit begins." And this was the doctrine of Jesus Christ. He declared that faithfulness in that which is least is the great essential of a noble career. The great collapses in life are often the results of the small slips. It is the tiny bits that make the human picture a success or a failure.

II

But I am grateful to God that in presenting to you this sad picture of the danger, and indeed the certain ruin, that must come upon a life of disobedience to God persisted in, I

may still come as a messenger of good tidings and urge upon you the truth that God is always seeking to deliver us and to offer to us His grace and strength to build our walls of character and life anew. In Isaiah, in the 29th chapter, we have another word of God's about walls, where He says, "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." In this case the Lord was speaking about walls that were broken down and in ruins. The people to whom His message was coming were the captive Jews in Babylon and they thought of their broken and ruined walls with great discouragement, but God makes them know that He has a vision of the walls rebuilt in all their beauty and glory. And so I bring you the message to-night that our God, through Jesus Christ, is seeking after you to renew and rebuild the walls which your sins have broken down. I saw not long ago a very quaint but heart-searching sort of poem written by Dr. Hake, an Englishman, to which he has given the unusual title "Old Souls to Mend." It describes the divine and redeeming presence of Christ going as a

Seeker, unrecognized, through the street and
the market-place, in the hovel and palace,
and even into His own temples:

While standing on the palace-stone,
He is in workhouse, brothel, jail;
He is to play and ballroom gone,
To hear again the beauties rail;
With tender pity to behold
The dead alive in pearls and gold.

In meaning deep, in whispers low,
As bubble bursting on the air,
He lets the solemn warning flow
Through jeweled ears of creatures fair,
Who while they dance, their paces blend
With His mild words, Old souls to mend!

And when to church their sins they take,
And bring them back to lunch again,
And fun of empty sermons make,
He whispers softly in their train;
And sits with them if two or more
Think of a promise made of yore.

Of those who stay behind to sup
And in remembrance eat the bread,
He leads the conscience to the cup,
His hands across the table spread.
When contrite hearts before Him bend,
Glad are His words, Old souls to mend!

The little ones before the font
He clasps within His arms to bless,
As long ago, so still His wont
On them to lay peculiar stress.
Besides, of such His kingdom is;
Him they betray not with a kiss.

Christ is seeking now, as He sought in the days of His incarnation, pursuing the wanderer with unwearied love, with prayers, with tears, with entreaties, through the long search that comes to an end only when He finds. He is seeking some of you as a shepherd seeks for his lost sheep, with eyes like the eyes of eagles, and ears alert to catch the faintest sound. And why does He seek? Ah, He sees the beauty of the rebuilt walls of your character. He sees the redeemed and glorified building of your soul. He sees a man or a woman with all the innocence and glory of your childhood matured and blossoming and bearing fruit, unstained and unmarked by the sins which have marred and smothered the beauty and nobility that was possible for you. Christ's great love sees all that and, oh, how He longs to see it realized in you.

Henrik Ibsen, in the greatest dream of his literature, "Peer Gynt," tells the story how Peer left his native place in disgrace and long after came back an old man, and on his return he is possessed with a question he can not abandon: "Where have I, Peer Gynt, been all these years?" He means Peer Gynt, the

unspoiled, unfallen, who sprang from the thought of God: Where has that innocent, noble Peer Gynt been through all the years? He hears the crooning voice of Solveig, who had been his sweetheart when a boy, singing that the summer may pass and the next winter too, but he will come again. Tho blind, she feels it is he when he draws nigh; and he asks her the question that has been occupying him. "Oh, that is a question easy to answer," says Solveig. "Where would you look for that Peer Gynt but in the heart of one who loves him?" And when he replies that that is just an idea of her own, that she was the mother of that idea, Solveig says something that goes to the marrow of life: "Granted I am its mother, who is the father, who put the idea into my head? God." And Ibsen's dream ends there. That is the hope of mankind, that God loves us and has a vision of our possibilities so splendid that in His great love He gave Christ to die on the Cross that that dream might be realized. And Christ had such a glorious vision of our redeemed humanity that He went forth to the Cross with joy. Frederick Maurice said,

“My hope is not in my hold on God, but in God’s hold on me.”

I bring you this sublime message to-night. Tho the walls have been frail and daubed with untempered mortar, still God has not lost His vision of the nobler wall that is possible, and Jesus Christ is seeking His way into your heart that He may rebuild your walls so that they may stand forever. Why not act now? Nothing is so full of folly as delay in a matter so important, and when the possibilities for gain are so great. It is hard to find adequate illustrations whereby to show the folly of delay in accepting the offers of God in the conversion of the soul. Left to ourselves we are certain failures, and our lives are so uncertain, and the influences that affect us and draw us away toward final folly are so uncertain and unknown to us, that when Jesus Christ stands before us in the Gospel with infinite skill to bring to us just the change and transformation that we need to make our lives safe and glad and beautiful, what amazing folly that we turn away from Him and say, “I know if ever I am saved I must be saved through Jesus Christ. I know no one

else can do for me what He can do, but yet I must wait and think about it, and put it away for some other time." You are doing what the wicked king did when he turned Paul away to a more convenient season, which never came. "To-day is the day of salvation. If you hear his voice, harden not your hearts!"

CUSHIONS—GOOD AND BAD

“Wo to the women that sew pillows upon all elbows.”—Ezek. 13 : 18.

“Put now these rags and worn-out garments under thine armholes, under the cords.”—Jeremiah 38 : 12.

“My yoke is easy.”—Matthew 11 : 30.

OUR theme starts with the first text, with its strange rebuke of the women who cushion the armholes, or sew pillows on the elbows. We must always remember that this prophet was in an Oriental country and the imagery used naturally springs out of the life which he saw about him. The people of the East are generally indolent and voluptuous. The art which they most study is the art of making themselves physically comfortable. They are what we would call a very lazy people. Enter an Eastern divan, or the drawing-room of an aristocratic mansion or palace, and the Western traveler is at once struck with the ingenuity and care with which provision is made for the ease of the body and the enjoyment of the senses. Odors and perfumes of sweetest

fragrance are diffused through the room; fountains or vases of cold water are used to cool the heated air of the tropics; the sides and corners of the room are cushioned all around, while movable cushions of every form and size, richly embroidered and ornamented, are spread on the couches and chairs, and even on the floor. In the days when this love of ease and luxury was carried to excess, pillows were provided not only for the head and shoulders and back, but for the arms and for every joint, that every part of the body might lie softly and feel comfortable. It would not be twisting the Scripture to translate the text so as to make it read "pillows for all arm joints," including the armholes, as it is interpreted in the old version, as well as the elbows and wrists. This is the condition of things that caused Ezekiel to seize this picturesque imagery as a text for a great message to his people.

I

Ezekiel uses this quaint and forcible imagery to impress on the people that their salvation could come only through a thorough and gen-

vine turning from their sins and obedience to God. This earnest prophet had been commissioned to lift up his voice against an army of false prophets who had been misleading the people by proclaiming a salvation without repentance and grace without judgment. He is filled with righteous indignation at the bid which these demagogues make for popularity by trying to accommodate their message, which purported to come from God, to the selfishness, the laziness, and the sinful desires of the people; and so he chooses this imagery to urge home on the conscience of the entire nation that a true peace, real security, genuine tranquillity, could be obtained only by fearlessly and honestly laying bare the truth, however stern and uncomfortable it might be, and not by covering it up with devices calculated to hide its hideousness and soften its painfulness.

I am sure that this message is needed in our own time. This old custom of making cushions for all joints and undertaking to fit the salvation of God to the selfish desires of wicked men is still in vogue. There is a tendency to bring the Gospel requirements

down to men rather than to lift men up to the requirements of the Gospel. My dear friends, a religion that does not change you, that does not hold you to your duty, that does not gird you for honest service of God and men, that does not stimulate you to a keener devotion for right living and a more prayerful relation to your Heavenly Father, is of no value to you. A religion that does not change a man so that in business and in society and in politics it will mark him as something different from wicked and sinful men, is useless. Hence Christ says that if any man will follow Him, let him deny himself and take up his cross and come after Him. Now what does that mean? It means that a man, when he undertakes to be a Christian, undertakes, by the help of God, in the gracious companionship of Jesus Christ, to deny those things in his own nature that are wrong. He means to fight to the death those appetites and passions which would shame him if exhibited in the immediate presence of Jesus Christ.

And what does it mean to say that he will take up his cross? It must mean that he will

take up the burden of Christianity in the community where he lives and in the world. He will, with all his heart and ability, bear Christ's cross before the world. He will let the mark of Christ be on him and henceforth he will be known as Christ's man. And so, when I ask you, my brother, to be a Christian, I do not ask you to any mushy, goody-goody sort of life. I ask you to be a soldier in the most glorious chivalry the world ever saw, I ask you to take up a knighthood more romantic and splendid than history tells us about. You are to break a lance for every good cause and for every weak soul, and with the colors of the Cross you are to live your whole life in noble warfare for the best things dreamed of in earth or heaven.

II

In the second text we have a suggestion of a time and circumstance where cushions are desirable and honorable when used by us. The text is a key to a most interesting story, a Bible story which is not often told. Jeremiah, like the brave hero he was, told his people of their folly, their sins, and their

approaching doom, and they hated him for it. Then the angry princes went to King Zedekiah and told him that Jeremiah had frightened the people, that instead of doing good he was doing harm. That is just what some of the great heads of corporations now say when an unselfish and heroic public servant rises up and exposes the grafters and points out the way of righteousness in business and political life. They have to admit things are bad, but they claim that these prophets of righteousness make business uncertain and do more harm than good. Well, the king, in this case, was not a man with a very strong backbone. They asked the king to kill the prophet, and while he would not do that outright himself, he gave way to them and said, "Behold, he is in your hands." He was a coward, like Pilate, and wanted to make a semblance of keeping his own hands clean of a good man's blood. So these people took Jeremiah away, and they seemed to have been a little fearful themselves of killing him outright before the people, so they thought they would kill him by degrees. They took him to an old dungeon, a deep pit which often

had water in it, and they let him down there to die. But instead of the pit being full of water, there was only a lot of mud in the bottom, and Jeremiah sank down in the mire.

Now, the king, Zedekiah, had a black servant whose name was Ebed-Melech. All we know about him is what happened at this time. But we see enough to know that tho his skin was black, his heart was white. When he heard of what the princes had done, he went to the king and pleaded for Jeremiah's life. Perhaps Jeremiah had been good to him, and that kindness had been bread cast upon the waters, which now came back to bless the prophet. Ebed-Melech was a good servant and the king told him he could go and save the prophet. So he went, and remembering how weak and frail the prophet was, and how deep the pit, he hunted up a lot of worn-out garments and soft rags and these he took with him to the pit's head, and, tying them to the end of a rope, he let them down to Jeremiah in the pit. But Jeremiah was faint and ready to die, and he did not notice. So the big black man put his head down over the pit and shouted "Jeremiah!

Jeremiah!! Jeremiah!!!” And when he gets him roused enough to see that somebody is coming to his aid, he shouts down to him, “Put these rags and worn-out garments under your armholes and fasten the cords around them, so that I may pull you out.” And at last, Jeremiah, with feeble, trembling fingers, manages to make the cords fast, and is lifted out.

Now, our message is that if you are going to do a kindness, there is no way too beautiful or gentle. A kind, helpful deed is such a beautiful picture that it always ought to be well framed. Even the black Ebed-Melech remembered when he was going to do so great a deed as to save a man’s life, that it was worth while doing it in a kind and gracious way. He remembered how weak the prophet was and knew the cords would bruise and chafe his tender flesh, and so he undertakes to lift him out in a gentle way. My friends, we ought to do the good deeds which God gives us a chance to do in the most beautiful way we can devise. And in the greatest of all work which God ever puts in our hands, the privilege of helping to rescue men and women

from the deep dungeon of sin, from the mire and the clay of their wicked habits and their sinful passions, we ought to study and devise ways by which we can most tenderly lift them out of the dark depths of iniquity. There ought to be in this story a message, I am sure, to each one of us who are Christians, and who have had on our hearts some people whom we have longed to see brought into the forgiving love of our Savior. Let us ask ourselves whether we have been as thoughtful as we ought about the details of our efforts to win them to Christ. When it is so great a thing as the salvation of a man's soul, it ought to be worth while to put our very best thought into it, our deepest affection and tenderness into the problem of making a success of the rescue.

III

And in our last text we have the comforting suggestion that after all the true cushions, that give the most peace, and the certain rest, and the easier career, are in the way of the earnest Christian life. It was to the tired

people, the people who were hard-worked, who were taxed, and oppressed, and burdened till they knew scarcely which way to turn, that Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The great cushion under the yoke of the man or the woman who is yoked up with Jesus Christ is in this, that his conscience is easy. He has the assurance that his sins are all forgiven. He has the glad consciousness that he is doing the best he can and that God is pleased with him. Oh, what a cushion that is!

Another cushion that keeps the shoulder of the true Christian from chafing is the glad and happy association which he has with Christ. He is keeping step with Jesus. He is pulling at the same load with the divine Savior of the world. A man may be poor and unknown, but he is yoked up with the most beautiful, the most glorious, the most lovely character the world ever saw. He may not seem to have much strength, but

such strength as he has is cooperating with Jesus Christ to dry the tears of mankind, to cure the heartaches of humanity, and lift the world up to God.

My friend, if you want a cushion that will give you peace in every stress of life or death, hear and heed the call of Christ, "Come unto me!"

THE SOUL'S SATISFACTION

"He satisfieth the longing soul."—Psalm 107 : 9.

AN ENGLISH writer heads a suggestive article with this title: "The Ache of Modernism." He rings the changes on the fact that there is in our modern life a deep undertone of dissatisfaction and unrest which the rich inheritance of the present generation, richer than in any age of the world, nevertheless fails to satisfy. The world was never more beautiful than it is to-day, and its beauties were never so available as at the present. Science and art have opened to us their treasures, and culture is spreading before us an ever-widening domain. And yet, notwithstanding that the world is fuller of agencies that uplift and console and bless than ever before, this undertone of melancholy and unrest is forever beating on the shores of life like the deep moan of the sea. Nor is it confined to any one class of the community. Lecky, the philosopher, says, "Anxiety and

ennui are the Scylla and Charybdis on which the bark of human happiness is wrecked." And these are the burdens of the rich and poor alike.

In this rich, luxurious age it seems strange to the superficial observer to find the riot of tragedy and unhappiness among the well-to-do and the rich. Much of our modern fiction is given up to picturing the doings and the vaporings, the follies of men and women who have had enormous wealth in money and opportunity and privilege poured into their laps. The man who hunts "a pleasant story" to read these days is hard put to it. Our literature is largely filled up with melancholy and tragedy. We have seen within the last few weeks, during the financial disturbances, men committing suicide who still had two or three or more millions of dollars left in their treasury, because other millions had taken wings and flown away. All these things emphasize to us the fact that man is too great for simply worldly satisfaction. If he were only an animal, these things could give him peace; but because he is greater and has in him a nature granted of God, akin to the divine,

he can not find satisfaction in mere worldly goods. But we have here in our text a great declaration. The Psalmist declares that God "satisfieth the longing soul." There can be no greater theme for us to study than that satisfaction.

I

Among the many utterances of the Bible which promise satisfaction none is more universal in its application than that which promises satisfaction in the hour of weariness. Through the mouth of Jeremiah we have this divine declaration, "*I have satiated the weary soul.*" Weariness may come from a thousand sources. It may come to the young and to the old, to the high and to the low, to the rich and to the poor, to the successful perhaps fully as frequently as to the defeated. Is there some "balm in Gilead" that can heal the ache of weariness and cause the dying bough of man's courage to send out new bud and blossom again with the vigor of eternal hope?

The writer to whom I first referred, in

discussing "The Ache of Modernism," suggests that this world-weariness may rise from life's monotony. The daily tasks tend to grow odious when the hands have to take up the same duties day after day. One of the greatest burdens is the sense of being imprisoned in the commonplace. When men pass the whole of their days in making pin-heads, he says it is no wonder that they fret and chafe at the deadly dulness of things; that the mother in humble surroundings, caring for her child day after day, her life limited to that narrow round of humble service, finds it monotonous and the soul aches and moans with deadly weariness. How does God heal that weariness? The world is full of illustrations. There was once a shoemaker whose whole career seemed chained to his bench, where he made wooden pegs and drove them into the soles of shoes for his neighbors to wear. Surely there was a chance for the soul to ache with weariness. What relieved it? A Bible fell into his hands. He read it and studied it with ever growing wonder. His soul grew on what it fed upon. The marvelous career of Paul, the tent-maker,

who became the great missionary to the Gentiles, absorbed every spare moment. His soul reveled in the wonderful story of that missionary career until there was born in him the great purpose to make every peg he drove into a shoe-sole a factor in the world's redemption, and so, instead of finding life weary and useless, he became William Carey, the father of modern missions.

Here is a young mother, the wife of a poor workingman in humble circumstances, whose child comes to her as the gift of God, and when she looks into its eyes and caresses its soft baby hair she thinks of the manger in Bethlehem, and the Christ who was cradled there. Into her heart comes a sisterhood to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and there is born in her soul the wonderful conviction that if she can so mother this child as to bring it to be a good man or a noble woman she is the most honored of all God's creatures. To such a mother all monotony is gone and all weariness is healed. In her is realized the poet's vision when he sings:

The whole world once to a mother came
To buy her child away;
There were rich and poor, there were great and small,
There were wise men old and gray.

Said one, "For your child I'll give you gold";
But the mother smiled tenderly,
"There is gold enough in my baby's hair,"
She quietly said, "for me."

"Jewels!" a childless couple cried,
But smiling again, she said:
"My baby's eyes are my diamonds bright,
His lips are my rubies red."

"My kingdom," offered a gray-haired king,
But strange was the look she gave;
"This is my king, who lies asleep,
And I his adoring slave."

"The world and its treasures, all, wilt take?
Its gold, its castles and lands?"
"The world," she replied, "could purchase not
The touch of my baby's hands."

So the world returned to its wealth and pride,
To sail its ships on the deep;
But none were happy as she who sat
Singing her baby to sleep.

In connection with this last utterance in regard to weariness the Lord says, "*I have replenished every sorrowful soul.*" Sorrow, like weariness, is as wide as human life and struggle and defeat, and yet God declares that He has power to replenish the sorrowful soul. The

divine cure for sorrow lies in the promise and revelation of immortality. If this world is all, then there is for many only the giving up to sorrow, the surrender to despair. But God lifts us out of the "Slough of Despond" with the golden chain of immortal hope. These are only our school-days here, and we can afford to make light of uncomfortable things which last but for a little while if they are helping to fit us for the great purpose of our creation. The captain of an ocean steamer will tell you that a little head-wind is a good thing and favors a rapid voyage; it makes the furnaces draw. There are many graces that are dependent upon sorrow for their growth. Go into a great paper-mill and see the contrast between the heap of filthy rags at one end and the pure and spotless white paper at the other. What a trial the rags go through before they come out in this new and glorified form! They must first be torn to pieces and ground to pulp, bleached with chemicals until all stains are removed, washed over and over; bleached again by the action of powerful and searching ingredients; washed again until the torn and helpless pulp is

white as a snowflake; caught upon a wire cylinder after the severe shaking which crosses the fibers and gives firmness to the fabric, they are passed between and around the hot surfaces which make the paper smooth and even. So God satisfies the sorrowing soul by bringing to its conception the wonderful faith that the Divine discipline means the cleansing away of our sins, the beautifying of our natures, and the bringing us at last to eternal triumph.

Dr. Campbell Morgan tells a pathetic but beautiful story about Commander Booth-Tucker, who lost his wife a few years ago in a terrible railway accident. A few weeks afterward Dr. Morgan was holding meetings in a Western city. Booth-Tucker came to visit Morgan, who declares that he shall never forget the talk he had with him. Dr. Morgan said to him, "Commander, the passing of your beloved wife was one of the things that I freely confess I can not understand." The bereaved man looked at him across the breakfast table, his eyes wet with tears, and yet his face radiant with that light which never shone on sea or land, and said, "Dear man, do you

not know that the Cross can only be preached by tragedy?" Then he told Morgan this incident: "When my wife and I were last in Chicago, I was trying to lead a skeptic to Christ in a meeting. At last the skeptic said, with a cold, glittering eye and sarcastic voice, 'It is all very well. You mean well; but I lost my faith in God when my wife was taken out of my home. It is all very well; but if that beautiful woman at your side lay dead and cold by you, how would you believe in God?' "

Within one month his wife had been taken away through the awful tragedy of that railway accident, and Commander Booth-Tucker went back to Chicago, and, in the hearing of a vast multitude, said, "Here in the midst of the crowd standing by the side of my dead wife as I take her to burial, I want to say that I still believe in Him, and love Him, and know Him."

II

In connection with our text there is a reference to a satisfaction of the soul which is very significant and precious. The entire

verse reads, "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and *filleteth the hungry soul with goodness.*"

There is a soul hunger which is the supreme proof of the greatness of the soul. The soul can not be satisfied without goodness. There is no other food that can give it peace. Dr. George Gordon, in a recent sermon preached at the National Conference of the Congregational churches, brings this out very strong and clear in the declaration that nothing can much avail that does not enrich and improve our personal being; nothing can work us much harm that leaves high existence unscathed, untouched. Health, wealth, position, fame, influence, intellectual power, rich relations with high minds of the race are good only as they raise our lives to higher excellence, only as they impart to us a finer grace and nobility. If all the good things of life leave us low and worldly and selfish, then they have failed, miserably failed, to be of value; they are but vanity in the presence of the worm that gnaws and the fire that is unquenched. All our prosperity, our luxury and success, are vain if they leave us still in our sins. If the

soul is hungry and restless and unsatisfied, what does it avail if we possess the whole world? Here is the closet where the skeleton dwells. "It is not in the body—that is well; it is not in the means of existence, for these are abundant; it is not in position, for that is honorable; nor in repute, for that is fair; nor in intellectual power, for that is respectable, and in many cases eminent. All these rooms in our dwellings are open; the sweet air and the gracious sunshine fill and flow through them." But it is in another room, the apartment of our personal nature, our personal being. Are you just and kind, or unjust and selfish? Open the door into that inmost recess of your being and look upon the veritable character of your soul. The Greek Socrates said, under an unjust sentence of death, "There is no evil can happen to a good man in life or in death." The Christian Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" Here is a magnificent conception of goodness and love. If we are evil, if our affections and ambitions grovel among low things, if we degrade ourselves by greed and dishonor, then there is no peace for the soul,

there is nothing that can satisfy the heart's longing. So long as we are wrong, and doing wrong, nothing really good can come to us either in life or in death. There is only one great food that can still the soul-hunger and satisfy its longings, and that is goodness. Does any man cry out of the depths of a hungry heart, "How can I find goodness?" My reply is that you must find it at the feet of God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. It is not for us to make ourselves good, but with complete surrender we must come in childlike simplicity to Him who is the Author and Father of goodness. The God who gave goodness to Paul the persecutor, who lifted David out of the mire and the clay, who transformed a poor drunken tinker like John Bunyan and filled his soul with the dreams of "Pilgrim's Progress," that God is the hope of the sinner. He has power to fill the hungry soul with goodness, and goodness is the one thing that matters to us. No matter what other success we have, it will all go for nothing unless we become good. If we achieve goodness through the mercy and love of God in Jesus Christ, then nothing

can save us from being victors in our career.
Some one nobly sings:

It matters little where I was born,
Or if my parents were rich or poor;
Whether they shrank from the cold world's scorn,
Or walked in the pride of wealth secure;
But whether I live an honest man,
And hold my integrity firm in my clutch,
I tell you, my brother, as plain as I can,
It matters much!

It matters little how long I stay
In a world of sorrow, sin, and care;
Whether in youth I am called away,
Or live till my bones and pate are bare;
But whether I do the best I can
To soften the weight of adversity's touch
On the faded cheek of my fellow man,
It matters much!

It matters little where be my grave,
On the land or on the sea,
By purling brook or 'neath stormy wave,
It matters little or naught to me;
But whether the Angel of Death comes down
And marks my brow with his loving touch,
As one that shall wear the victor's crown,
It matters much!

THE UNSEEN FACTOR IN A HUMAN LIFE

“But God—.”—Acts 13 : 30.

THE two significant words of our text are used many times in the Bible in this same relation. In this case they are used in Luke’s description of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The high priests had hounded Jesus to His death, and had secured His crucifixion. He had been taken down from the cross and laid away in the grave. His enemies were jubilant. The mob gave itself to carousal. But these foes had left God out of the account, and Luke quietly writes, “But God raised him from the dead.”

“Ian Maclaren” used to tell of two pictures which he once saw in the Salon in Paris. One represented a king lying on his bed. He had just died, and his servants, who a moment before had flown at his word, were engaged in rifling his casket and his wardrobes. What do you think was the legend beneath? “Will-

iam the Conqueror." Such a victory! Just a moment dead, and his own servants were despoiling him! The other picture represented a Man lying in a rocky tomb, also dead; but the angels were keeping watch, and to that tomb, now empty, all ages and all generations are coming. He was the Conqueror and His the victory. Many a man whom the world has hailed as conqueror has failed miserably because he failed to take God into account, and many whom the world counted a great failure have come to immortal success because God interfered.

James Anthony Froude tells the story of a slave in a French galley who was one morning bending wearily over his oars. The day was breaking, and, rising out of the gray waters, a line of cliffs was visible, and the white houses of a town and a church tower. The rower was a man unused to such service, worn with toil and watching, and, it was thought, likely to die. A companion touched him, pointed to the shore, and asked him if he knew it. "Yes," he answered, "I know it well. I see the steeple of that place where God opened my mouth in public to His glory, and I know,

how weak soever I now appear, I shall not depart out of this life till my tongue glorify His name in the same place." That place was St. Andrews; that galley slave was John Knox; and we know that he came back and did glorify God in that place, and others also.

Our theme this morning is this unseen factor in human life which is suggested by the peculiarity of this phrase. I will recall a few utterances that are specially full of teaching and inspiration, suggesting the interference of God in human life.

I

It is specially interesting in this connection to note that nothing can give to men a permanent vitality which can triumph over all difficulties and endure all defeats save the virility which comes from association and communion with God. We have this suggested in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where, speaking of the deprest and dull and heavy life of selfishness and sin which they had once experienced, contrasting it with their present, he bursts forth in joyous exclamation: "But

God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." There is something very inspiring and very beautiful in this suggestion of "being alive with Christ." In an age when many people are bored, and we have such words as "ennui," and people who have every opportunity of wealth and culture are fairly yawning themselves out of existence, it is inspiring to remember that in every nation and in every tribe of the earth where men are truly made alive with Christ they have as much enthusiasm and gladness and joy of living as in any age of the world. There is nothing more charming than this supreme vitality. It was said of Sir Wilfred Lawson, the pioneer Christian temperance leader of England, that he could well afford to be a teetotaler. He was always in the condition of a man who has taken a powerful stimulant, sparkling, bubbling, ebullient. Whatever his circumstances were, he could jest, and the laughter was from the heart. Sir Wilfred Lawson pursued his aim with un-deviating tenacity, but he disguised the sever-

ity of his conscience by his gay, random, unforced wit. His laughter was as joyous and glad and happy as a child's. My friends, if any of you are saying to-day—

Oh, show me the road to Laughter-town,
 For I have lost the way!
 I wandered out of the path one day,
 When my heart was broken, my hair turned **gray**
 And I can't remember how to play;

 I've quite forgotten how to be gay,
 It's all through sighing and weeping, they say.
 Oh, show me the road to Laughter-town,
 For I have lost the way.

If that is your cry to-day, I know that I can point you the way to laughter-town. It is the way to that fellowship with God which will make you truly alive in Jesus Christ. People who live in joyous vitality with Christ alone can have that vital gladness that, passing through trials and defeats, will feel them, indeed, but will not be conquered by them.

Alfred Tennyson celebrated the memory of Jephthah's daughter in one of his best poems, "The Dream of Fair Women." In this poem the great heroines of history pass before the poet in a dream; and among them comes this daughter of Jephthah. As he looks at her,

he sees in her breast the mark of the spear-wound. The look of tragedy and sorrow is in her countenance still; yet when the poet would sympathize with her fate, and cries out, "History records no blacker crime than that rash vow," she waves him back. She wants no pity; she feels the need of none. What matter if her life be sacrificed, so her country be free, her father's honor be saved? "It comforts me," she concludes:

It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father's will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

Moreover, it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon hip and thigh, . . . Here her face
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She locks her lips; she left me where I stood:
"Glory to God," she sang, and past afar,
Thriding the somber boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning star.

It is a beautiful picture which the poet paints for us, but that same vital joy which rises superior to all trial and struggle is known by multitudes of Christian men and women in the most ordinary walks of life.

II

There are a number of occasions in which this significant phrase is used in the Bible to suggest how God interferes to overthrow the sinner who defies righteousness. Even in the days of Solomon this was clear to observing eyes, and the writer of that Book of Wisdom says, "But God overthroweth the wicked." But there is a still more significant utterance of this sort in the life of Jesus. It is interesting to recall the brief story which the Master tells, and which Luke has written down for us in his biography of Christ:

And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?

So is he that laveth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

This man had left God out of the account, but not even the millionaire can do that with safety. We have just had a terrific illustration of how the god of this world throws gold dust into the eyes of business men and makes them deaf and blind to the God of all the universe. We have just seen closed the struggle in our State to blot out the curse of strong drink, to take away the State's partnership in sorrow and misery and crime which springs from the liquor saloon as from a mighty fountain of iniquity. And we have seen, not because they thought it right, not because they thought the saloon to be other than a curse to the homes of the people, but because they believed it would hurt business, and for a time endanger the streams of gold pouring into their pockets—because of this, we have seen bankers and merchants and manufacturers, many of them members of Christian churches and officers in the house of God, banding themselves together to entrench and continue this monstrous iniquity, this cruel oppression upon the poor and the weak. We may well believe that God looks down upon these men and says, "Thou foolish ones."

But there are other circles where men have the erroneous impression that success depends upon wickedness and is impossible with complete devotion to righteousness.

Richard Le Gallienne brought out a book a while ago in memory of Robert Burns, in which he undertakes to apologize for and excuse the immoralities of Burns by saying, "Well-ordered feelings, a balanced mind, and regular habits have seldom resulted in poetry, hardly ever in poetry of the highest order." Such stuff as that! And yet we hear many people talk as if they felt much the same way. It is all folly. Both Lord Byron and Robert Burns missed by a great gulf the glory they might have known if they had lived pure lives. And it is not true that there can be no great poetry coupled with great righteousness. Think of Dante and Vergil in the older world; think of Milton and Wordsworth and Tennyson and Browning in England. And if we come to America we have our own galaxy of immortal poets such as Holmes and Whittier and Bryant and Longfellow and Lowell and many others whose lives were as pure and sweet as their songs. No, my friend,

neither in business, in literature, in art, nor in politics, can any man safely leave God out of the account.

III

And now I want to turn to a most comforting suggestion, and that is, that tho all men be against the Christian, the servant of God has God with him, and He will be his keeper wherever he goes. In the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the story of Joseph is recalled, how his brothers, moved by their envy and hate, sold Joseph into Egypt, and they thought that would be the last of him. They thought they had put an end to all his dreams and visions, but, Luke writes, "But God was with him." And we all know the story, how God was his keeper in a strange land, and brought him to triumph. And we may find comfort in this faith, that if we give ourselves over to God, to be kept by Him, we may rest in peace. He will interfere in our behalf. Thousands of years ago a man wrote a letter—in poetry—to a friend who had a large family. The friend had a

hard life and lived very anxiously and became much careworn. He rose early and sat up late, worrying about the high cost of living, just as we do now. Now this man had a friend who had great spiritual insight, and his poet-friend wrote him. You may find his letter in the one hundred and twenty-seventh Psalm, in the Bible, but you may paraphrase this letter something like this: "My dear fellow, give God a chance. You have excluded Providence from your life, and that is why you are laboring so heavily at the oar. Do you realize that no city is kept safely unless God walks behind the watchman; no house is ever truly built unless God guides architect and bricklayer, little as they may realize that guidance? He is in the small affairs of life as much as in the large. Do your best, then sleep, and trust God to keep His beloved—of whom I believe you are one—even while they are sleeping."

We should be comforted with the consciousness that God knows all about us:

He knows the bitter, weary way:
He knows the endless striving, day by day,
The souls that weep, the souls that pray.

He knows how hard the fight hath been,
The clouds that come our lives between,
The wounds the world hath never seen.

He knows when faint and worn we sink,
How deep the pain, how near the brink
Of dark despair we pause and shrink.

He knows! Oh, thought so full of bliss,
For tho our joy on earth we miss,
We still can bear it, feeling this—
He knows.

But perhaps some of you have a little shiver of doubt and you say to yourself, "Does God know, and yet send no relief?" Yes, He knows.

Ralph Connor tells the story of a little crippled girl who could not understand how God could be good and let her suffer so. Her friend asked her about the plaster jacket the doctors had put on her. "Did it hurt you when they put it on?" "It was awful," she replied, shuddering as she thought of it. "What a pity your father was not there!" said her friend. "Why, he was there." "Your father there, and did not stop the doctors hurting you so cruelly?" "Why, he let them hurt me. It's going to help me, perhaps make me able to walk about some day." "Oh,

then they did not hurt you in cruelty, just because they wanted to? I mean that your father loved you, tho he let you be hurt; or, rather, he let the doctors hurt you just because he loves you, and wants to make you well."

The girl became very thoughtful. Presently the light began to shine in her face. Then she asked, as the mystery of it all began to become clear to her, "Do you mean that tho God let me fall and suffer so, He loves me?"

Her friend nodded. Presently she said, as if to herself, "I wonder if that can be true."

My friend, you may be sure that God could relieve us of all the hard things we bear if He would. There is nothing that God could not do. Pilate boasted to Jesus that he had power to crucify Him, or to release Him, as he chose. But Jesus answered, "Thou canst have power only as it is given thee from above." This is God's world, and nothing can get out of God's hands. And God says to every man that is seeking to do right, "My loving-kindness shall not depart from thee." And God loves us just as much when He lets us suffer that we may be made better and nobler as when He sends us what we call prosperity.

IV

But I am loath to close our study without a word of special appeal to any who do not know God in the forgiveness of their sins. Are you a sinner against God? Is your heart and conscience clouded with the feeling that you are under the condemnation of the broken law of God? Then we may find hope in this, that while it is impossible for one man to save another man from his sins, it is still true that God has power on earth to forgive sins. When Christ said to the poor, sick man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," the critics said, "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" Thank God, it is still true that God can interfere through Jesus Christ in the salvation of the sinner. My friend, Dr. Wilbur Chapman, the evangelist, told recently the story of a remarkable event which took place two or three years ago one July day in London. It was the running of the Marathon race from Windsor Castle to the Stadium, twenty-six and one-third miles; with thousands waiting to welcome the runners, among the thousands the Queen. Not since the ancient Greek fell

dead at the feet of hundreds of thousands, after carrying a message of war a distance of twenty-six miles from the battlefield of Marathon to the public square of Sparta, was ever such a thrilling climax to a long-distance run. "Make way for the Marathon runners!" finally came the announcement as from the throat of a giant, when the approach of the runners was heralded. Everything else was forgotten, and the crowd, on its feet, turned its face to the entrance of the Stadium. The silence was breathless. For ten minutes in perfect silence the crowd of one hundred thousand stood, with all eyes focused on the gate directly opposite the royal stand, where the runners were to enter. Then the great voice rang out again: "The runners are in sight. Italy is in the lead!" Finally, a figure looking almost as small as that of a pigmy, appeared at the gate, and staggered down the incline leading to the track. He was clothed in a white shirt and red runner's knickers. This uniform confirmed the announcement that Italy was the leader in the race. The runner stood for a moment as tho dazed, and turned to the left, altho a red cord had been

drawn about the track in the opposite direction for the runners to follow. It was evident that the runner was practically delirious from his efforts. A squad of officials ran out and expostulated with him, pointing to him the right track, but he waved them away as tho they were trying to put him upon the wrong path and cheat him out of a victory dearly won. In a great roar the crowd shouted directions to the confused runner. At length Dorando, for he had been generally identified, started on the right path along the track. Then followed an exhibition that will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. He staggered on toward the turn in the track and dropt to the ground. It was but human that those who had witnessed his struggle should gather around him and lift him to his feet. But to all it was evident that he had run himself to the limit of his endurance. None of the spectators had expected to see him rise when he fell like a soldier crumpled up by a bullet, his face haggard and drawn. He was quickly lifted to his feet. Clearly he was unconscious. His limbs would not support him. One man took him by the arm,

another stood at his back, and he was pushed and dragged across the tape and then allowed to drop to the track and lie there, until a stretcher was brought to carry him away. But he lost the race. He was near; he was actually within sight of the goal, but he lost the race!

Oh, my friend, I beg you do not fail to read the parable! You may have been almost persuaded to be a Christian, but remember, "Almost is but to fail." It was against the rules for the officials to help Dorando, but it is not against the rules of God or heaven for your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to step forth, when we have faith in Him and have done our best, to help us over the goal, and He will do this. Will you not do your part here and now and take Christ as your Savior?

THE MASQUERADE OF LIFE

“Why feignest thou thyself to be another?”—1 Kings 14 : 6.

THERE is nothing in wealth, or position, or power of circumstance to ward off the common ills of human life. Sickness and pain and death find their way through the windows of the mansion or palace just as surely as into the cabin of the mountaineer, the hut of the sheep-herder, or the cottage of the farmer. Jeroboam was a king and lived in splendid style with hosts of servants to care for him and wait on his slightest wish. The very lives of multitudes of people were in his hand; but all this could not keep back the sickness that fell upon his only son and caused his heart to sink with fear for the life that was infinitely dear to him, for a father's heart beats under the king's jacket with the same tender solicitude as that which throbs beneath the blouse of the carpenter.

Now Jeroboam had been a wicked man.

He was a backslider. He had fallen away from God and His worship. But when his child fell ill, all his infidelity slipped away from him and down in his heart's depths he knew there was no hope for help save in the God of his fathers. And so he determined to try to find out what really was to happen by playing a trick on the prophet of God. Strange how a man will imagine that he can deceive God. At Shiloh there lived in retirement a venerable prophet of the Most High, Ahijah, a very old man who had entirely lost his sight with age. And King Jeroboam told his wife, the queen, to disguise herself as a peasant woman and take with her ten loaves, some cakes, and a cruse of honey, something to feed the old man and comfort his stomach and give him a pleasant mood, and then ask of him what is to become of the child which is so dear to them both. And so the queen strips off all the fine garments of the palace and clothes herself as a middle-aged woman from the peasant farms, and goes trudging down the road on foot to Shiloh, with her loaves and her cakes and her cruse of honey on her back.

But men do not deceive God that way. He who sees into the hearts of kings as well as ordinary men, spoke to the blind prophet and told him that the queen was on her way to inquire concerning her son, and revealed to the prophet what he should say to her. And so when the old blind man heard the sound of her feet, and he heard them at a distance, for blind eyes make quick ears, he put the queen into confusion by exclaiming to her before she had said a word: "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? For I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. Go, tell Jeroboam, thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel."

But the queen of Israel is not the only masquerader. Much of life is a masquerade ending with a transformation-scene, when the cry of "Masks off!" puts many to confusion. Shakespeare, in "As You Like It," makes one of his characters say, speaking of the world,

"This wide and universal theater
Presents more woful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play."

To which another replies,

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in his nurse’s arms.
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like a furnace, with a woful ballad
Made to his mistress’ eyebrow. Then a soldier
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon’s mouth, and then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper’d pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
His second childishness and mere oblivion
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

Again, in “Macbeth,” the great dramatist makes that warrior of melancholy fate, speaking of life as a whole, say—

“Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more.”

The more we study into life and the more we know of it, the more we shall appreciate the large factor masquerade is in it. We find that few things are what they seem and that few people are exactly what they seem. Charles Lamb used to say in his time, "The only honest men are beggars. They are the only people in the universe who are not obliged to study appearances." But in our time we have found that beggars are often only masqueraders, like the queen of Israel in peasant dress, for revenue only. David wrote, "I said in my haste, all men are liars"; on which old Adam Clarke quaintly remarked, "Had he lived in our time, he might have said it at his leisure." I am sure there must be in our theme that which will repay earnest study.

I

Life teaches us that there are many who masquerade under evil garments who are like those whom Jesus declared to be nearer the kingdom of God than some who masquerade in the robe of a self-righteous profession. Mrs. Harold Gorst, who has written a most powerful book on the social question as it

exists in our modern cities, tells a story which she knows to be a fact, of life among the poor and degraded classes in the East End of London. The story tells of a little orphan girl who was left by her murdered mother as the guardian of her infant brother. She could not earn enough to maintain that poor little baby life, and one day, for lack of the rent for the miserable room they occupied, she and her charge were about to be turned into the street. She asked her neighbors, one after another, for help, and met only refusal. Poor creatures, they did not have the money. Standing on the rickety staircase she cried out in despair, "Nobody will help me, nobody will help me!" A voice behind her said, "Yes, somebody will," and a poor harlot who lived on the same staircase gave the little child her all, and within two hours was herself turned into the street. When we see a sight like that, we see how clearly Jesus Christ saw through the masquerade of life into the real hearts of men and women when He said to the self-righteous Pharisees, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

And I would like to put over against that story the summary of a terrible book which some of you have read, which is called, "The Silence of Dean Maitland." The central figure is that of a young clergyman who in early life commits two of the greatest crimes known to man. He is guilty of lust and murder; both through moral weakness. His dearest friend falls under suspicion, and is sent to penal servitude, he, through moral cowardice, remaining silent and acting a lie. The rest of his life becomes a lie. He climbs the ladder of promotion, step by step. He receives the nation's homage in the end, a courtly man, a fortunate man, a popular man. But in the very last scene of all, he has to unmask, and deliberately strips himself of his burden of falsity and tells the world what he is, and what he has done. He went into the outer darkness by his own act.

II

A peaceful heart and a radiant power of influence can come only through genuineness of soul, through perfect sincerity of heart and purpose. Jowett, the great English preacher,

who charmed many audiences in this country last summer, declares that peace is the general glow of health, resulting from the inter-related life of many members, each of whom occupies his appointed place in the spiritual order and is possest of equity and truth. And if that is true of peace among the nations or peace in the community, it must be also true of peace in a man's own heart. God's Word says, "There is no peace for the wicked." David says, "Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other." That is the sweet and beautiful fellowship. If a man's thoughts, if his passions, his impulses, his purposes, are impure, there can be no peace in his soul. There is no cohesion among the unclean. Dirt is always divisive. Did you ever try to solder a couple of pieces of tin together? If you did, you found that one of the first things you had to do was to see that both the edges were clean. If they are dirty, they can not be soldered. The same thing is true in the art of the surgeon in the hospital. Dirt is the enemy of healing; the gaping edges of the wound will come into communion if both are made clean. The same law prevails in

the sphere of the home. There is no cohesion among the unclean. If jealousy break out, the communion is broken. If lust appear, the family circle is shattered into fragments. In the home the price of peace is purity. Oh, my friends, the same is true in your own soul. The price of peace and the radiant beauty and power that will shine forth from a soul at peace with itself, is purity. There must be genuineness, no masquerading.

Modern science has shown us that radium light penetrates opaque objects and causes other bodies to glow with some of its light. A photographer was one day experimenting in his dark-room with a small vial of radium. A couple of diamonds were suspended over a plank three inches thick, and the radium was placed at a distance beneath, when soon the diamonds began to glow and blush with a mysterious fire. Another marvelous discovery made a few years ago is that invisible rays of light emanate from the nerves of the human body. A French scientist reading a paper before the French Academy of Sciences, telling of his "N rays," says that he found that the

more active the nerves of thought or impulse were, the more powerful were these rays; the more intense the mental action, the stronger the phosphorescent play about the forehead, the eyes, and the face. Does it not seem as if these recent discoveries of penetrative "R" and "N" rays were anticipated by the medieval artists, who placed halos around the heads of their saints? And we can not but remember how the spirit-light penetrated the fleshly matter of Stephen's face in the hour of his assassination, so that even his enemies bore witness that it shone like the face of an angel. Some one has said, "The plainest face becomes beautiful in noble and radiant moods." Every genuine soul, perfectly cleansed from impurity of thought or purpose and fired with earnestness for the truth and enthusiasm of love for the higher life, who is touched with the divine force that impels to the heroic in life, is a radioactive center of cheering and inspiring influence. No matter where such a man works, or what the special threads of power he holds, there goes forth from him a radiant power that makes him a veritable light of blessing in the world.

Thomas Carlyle once said, "I have seen gleams in the faces of men which let me see into a higher country."

III

The thought must give us pause, that life will certainly prove us, and finally bring out the reality, and death will complete the unmasking. We must stand before God at last, and before all the universe, for just what we are, without any masquerade of time, or wealth, or circumstance. Percy Ainsworth, a delightful young English preacher, who had his translation too early for those who loved him, speaking of the simple life, said that the one eternal authority, Jesus Christ, had exprest the simple life by saying, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." If the setting of life is to be simple and genuine, then the content of life must be spiritual. Do not confuse your mind between simplicity and economy. The simple life is not a matter of learning to live within your income; it is the attempt to do that which complicates life.

Multiply your income by what you will, and still it can not keep you. The simplest thing that goes to make life lies beyond your income. In the world of the heart, no man can pay his way. The simple life is the life that trusts the Fatherhood of God, the Saviorhood of Jesus Christ, the voice of the Spirit. Life is made up of things that defy all valuation by this world's standards, things the worth of which can be exprest only in that mystic coinage that is stamped with the image of One wearing a crown of thorns, and that has for its superscription, "Ye did it unto me." The truly simple life and the truly beautiful life can be lived only by the faith that transfigures duty, the love that transfigures association and fellowship, and the prayer that links life's essential poverty to God's infinite riches, and looks for a city of rest beyond the earthly need and the earthly nightfall.

The masquerade of life will soon be over for all of us, and the most important thing for each of us is that within all the scaffolding and display of our earthly career there shall be building up a personality and a character

which shall stand unconfused and unblushing when God shall cry "Masks off!" before an assembled universe. Here in the midst of the bustle and competition and struggle of our modern life it is hard to tell how much is mask and how much is man in the personality of those who play their parts, but the time will come when only the man will be left. In that day some people who have made a great appearance in the world will dwindle into contemptible insignificance, and other people who have not counted for much will suddenly swell and expand into great place and power. Professor George Huntington, some years ago, embodied this thought in a poem entitled, "How Much is He Worth?" drawing his inspiration from the simultaneous death of two men widely known, one of whom was very rich and one very poor. The rich man, however, was rich only in gold, which he left behind, while the poor man was rich in mind and heart, and faith, and good deeds, the essence of which he carried with him. He sings:

I

How much is he worth? Let them reckon **who care.**
A five-and-twenty-fold millionaire,
 A money-king is he,
With glitter and splendor on every hand,
With miles of houses and leagues of land,
And gold as the incomputable sand
 On the boundless shores of the sea.

How much is he worth? Let them tell us **who can,**
Not the sum of his gold, but the worth of the man
 To the world of living men.
For worth is not in the things possess.
'Tis the wealth of the mind. 'Tis the heart in the **breast.**
'Tis the goodness that blesses and is blest.
 A millionaire! What then?

How much is he worth? Let Death declare,
For Death has come for the millionaire,
 And naked and poor lies he,
The gold has dropt from his cold, dead hand.
He holds no title to house or land,
But his narrow house, and his bed in the sand
 Out under the graveyard tree.

How much is he worth? Let them answer **who dare.**
What, none to speak for the millionaire
 In the millions of living men?
A worthless life, by the world forgot!
A worthless carcass, to mold and rot!
A worthless soul, to the weighing brought
 In the scales of God! And then?

II

How much is he worth? Let them reckon who care.
A larder scant, and a coat threadbare,
 And a shilling or two has he,
A cot, and a little rood of land,
A sweating brow and a toiling hand,
Yet he counts his riches more than the sand
 On the shores of the boundless sea.

How much is he worth? Let them tell us who can.
There's less in the purse, but there's more in the man.
 To count in the world of men.
For he holds the most precious of things possess.
He's wealth in his mind; he's a heart in his breast,
And the love of the hearts that his love has blest.
 Humble and poor! What then?

How much is he worth? Let Death declare,
With his touch of peace on the brow of care,
 And the kind heart hushed to sleep.
There's rest at last for the toiling hand;
But the seed it dropt in the fruitful land
Hath harvests measureless as the sand
 On the shores of the infinite deep.

How much is he worth? Let the angels declare
The worth to heaven of its chosen heir,
 To God of his saintly men.
A life with fragrant memories fraught;
A soul resplendent with good deeds wrought;
A victor and king to the crowning brought
 In the palace of God! And then?

THE LIFE THAT IS WORTH LIVING

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”—John 1:4.

“He that hath the Son hath life.”—1 John 5:12.

“I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.”—John 10:10.

LIFE is the keynote of the universe. Nature, whatever else it reveals to us, shows us from the depths of the ocean to the tops of the highest mountains the never-ceasing struggle for life. Canon Scott Holland says that that alone gives to nature its coherence, its unity, and its purpose. Every leaf, every blade of grass, every insect, every bird—all the swarming population of the forest, all the teeming multitudes of the deep sea, they are there simply to live; they are there with all their energy, pushing, pressing, rushing, flying. Why? and whither? What is it they are after? What will it all come to? We do not know. Nor do they. Only this one irresistible motive is there: The fuller life, the higher degree of life, the higher capacity of living.

And in that very act of living nature finds its joy—joy in the act of feeling alive, feeling that life is still on the increase. So as we look out on nature, in spite of all its tremendous tragedies, and its dark secrets, and snares, and dooms, and even its torture—yet still the sense of joy prevails over all, the mere joy of being alive. Alfred Wallace, the naturalist, tells us that looking out over those vast forests in which he wrought out so much of the great work of his life, the joy of living was always the dominant note of the woods; and still above all the death that they secreted, every little creature was rejoicing. So far as it was alive, it was dancing with that joy.

Phillips Brooks in the last sermon which he preached on earth discusst “The Sacredness of Life”; his text was from David’s twenty-first Psalm, “He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.” In that sermon the great preacher enlarges on the fact that in the beginning of our human lives life seems to be merely life, life in its first and simplest form. The unconscious infant lives in a mere animal existence, and later when the strong and healthy

boy begins to grow conscious of the delight of life, it is pure life, life simply as a fact, life not with reference to the deeper powers it contains or the far-off issues with which it has to do that gives him such hourly delight in living. There comes back to many of us, I am sure, the ringing verse in which Browning has made this very David, when he was a boy, sing in the presence of King Saul of this pure consciousness of joy in the mere fact of being alive.

“ Oh, the wild joys of living! The leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree; the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal—the rich dates yellowed over with gold-dust divine
And the locust's flesh steeped in the pitcher! The full draft
of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! How fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy.”

In placing this bright unquestioned boyhood at the beginning of every man's career God would seem to indicate that He meant this

sense of life as a blessing in itself, to be the basis out of which all the sense of the special blessedness of special events in life must grow, as if He meant to have us take life as a whole and thank Him for our creation before we look deeper and see what are the true purposes of life. But by and by the time for that deeper look must come. Not always can David be content with the leaping from rock to rock, the plunge in the pool, and the sleep in the dry bed of the summer brook. The thoughts and anxieties and duties of a man come crowding up into the life of the light-hearted boy. Care for things to which he was once all indifferent, hopes of things about which he once never dreamed, ambitions and desires of influence and power, the delight in half-discovered faculties, and as the crown of all, conscious religion, or the realized relationship with God, the love of and obedience to Christ, all of these become his one after another. If there be the proper growth and development of manhood, one after another life has come to mean these things.

I

What constitutes the abundance of life which we are invited to seek in Jesus Christ? My reply would be that we are to seek life and not the machinery about life. Evidently physical life is but an illustration, a type, of the true life of manhood. And no abundance of physical things can make joyous and abounding living in the high sense of what life means to man. Of course, when we are to talk about this noblest life which is to be found in Christ, we are driven in the last appeal back to Christ Himself. Stanley Gerald Dunn, in an exceedingly interesting and thoughtful article, has recently discussed "The Romanticism of Christ." In that study he calls attention to the difference between Christ's idea of the abundant life and the common standard of the world. When men think of the abundant life, they think of the rich, but he calls attention to the fact that the rich are often more to be pitied than the poor. As a rule it is the wrong people who are rich, the people who have no capacity for real pleasure. They have no joy, only amuse-

ments; no object in life, only an office; no work, only business.

Then, too, the rich man is often tied to his possessions. He is fearful of losing them; he becomes the slave of luxurious habits; he would be miserable without his servants. He is always relying on other people; he never lives a man's life at all. Even in the tortures of hell the rich worldly man can not cast off the habits of a lifetime. "Send Lazarus," he pleads.

Many who have all the means of life never really live at all. "For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the goods that he possesseth." He who is bound by his possessions is not free to follow impulse; he fears to go out at the call of adventure; he dares not leave all that he has and give himself up to the destinies of God. Above all, his delicate life has bred in him a fear of suffering, and so he misses the revelation that comes from suffering alone.

There is nothing wrong about riches in themselves, Christ would say; the danger lies in the attitude of mind toward them. Too often the rich man is not the possessor of his

riches, but is possessed by them. After all, living is the object of life. It may be a fine thing to become a great lawyer or a famous financier, but what is the use of that, if, to do so, you must give up your life? "What can it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his own life?" Riches are but the means, not the end; and how many people give up the real joys of life to amass wealth or to make a position in the world! Some one says: "There's the wind on the heath, brother: if I could only feel that, I would gladly live forever." You could not imagine a modern Dives saying that!

There is the romantic spirit in all Christ's treatment of riches, things, possessions. He blest the woman who came and broke the alabaster box of ointment, very precious, over His head as He sat in the house of the rich man. Some that looked on the ointment as a valuable thing in itself failed to see that it was only the beautiful use of it that justified its existence at all.

Mr. Dunn calls attention to the fact that in all romantic literature and in all romantic lives there recurs the same note. It is in

Dante and Shakespeare and Shelley; it is in the life of Francis of Assisi, with his love for his little sisters the birds, and his brother the wind. Most perfectly exprest is it in the life of Christ. He took the world for His home, the wonderful world of sun and rain, of mountains and seas and towns, and all who did the will of God and lived natural lives as His brothers and sisters. Only, of all who went about with Him and shared in that delightful companionship He asked in return belief in Himself, which is indeed belief in human nature at its highest.

Christ demanded then, as He demands now, that whosoever will be His disciple and enter into the abundant life of noblest fellowship and serenest joy shall defy the tyranny of things. It is not in goods but in goodness that you will find the secret of the noblest spiritual life; not in machinery, but in soul; in the spirit which conceives loving deeds and the joyous enthusiasm which performs them; in the love which takes in God and man and rejoices in service. Here is life not starved and lethargic, but abounding, glorious life.

II

This abounding life in Jesus Christ is full of power to cast off evil. All life is charged with power. In the lowest vegetable life there is remarkable power. I have seen the story of a workman who could not make out how it was that he could not shut his door. Of course the door had not grown, but it looked as if it had. He could not shut it, and he took a saw and cut off a bit at the bottom of it. Time went on, until at last it would not shut again. What could it be? The thought struck him: "There may be something underneath the stone slab." He took up the stone slab, and he found there a large fungus. There was life in that fungus, and because there was life, the only vegetable life, it lifted the heavy stone. That is a very low order of life, but you and I are called to partake of the very highest order of life. Hear what Paul says: "That ye might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."

My friends, it is this glorious resurrection life which we have in us when we fully give ourselves to be the disciples of Jesus.

Some of you have sought to escape from the power of sin and have failed. It is this life which you need. You have said: "I must throw off this wicked habit"; and you have made new resolutions. But you need something more than resolutions. You need the vigor of a new life in you to stimulate and give strength and vitality to your resolution. If there was spiritual life enough in you, you would be able to throw off that wicked habit as the vigorous tree throws off its leaves when it no longer needs them. Sir John Lubbock once gave a lecture in London on "The Fall of the Leaf," a scientific lecture, of course. He brought into the lecture-room a branch of a tree. He told his hearers that this branch once grew on a tree in his grounds, and he went on to say: "Many of you think that the fall of the leaf is a process of death. I want to prove to you that the fall of the leaf is a process of life. That branch I broke off in the autumn. I did not sever it from the tree. There it hung to the tree, but it was

a broken branch. I watched it. After the autumn the winter came, and then the early spring, and I watched the branch. With the early spring the life-sap began to rise, and I noticed that all the leaves on the whole tree, with the exception of the leaves on the broken branch, fell to the ground because the power of the life-sap pushed the dead leaves off. The dead leaves from the broken branch remained, and here they are to-day, and it needs a good tug to pull them off." What a wonderful illustration of what we need to push off bad habits and rise into wholesome life! You can not pull them off. What do you need? More life-sap, of course! Christ in us, the hope of glory, furnishes the life-sap that will push off every evil thing and rise in glorious growth toward heaven and immortality.

III

Finally, we have suggested the joy of life. It is impossible that we should not get joy out of living if we really are alive in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." That

means that there is only one root, and only one life flowing through all the branches. If we are really Christ's disciples, then the same joyous triumphant life which made Him gladly march toward the cross for the joy that was set before Him will pulse through our veins. We may be in the midst of many things that are pulling us down. We may be surrounded with polluting, deadly influences; but they can not stop the flow of the heavenly life in our hearts. The mighty Columbia River flows far out into the Pacific Ocean before it loses its identity or its quality. I have seen the deck-hand drop his bucket over the side of the steamship and bring it up full of sweet, wholesome water, altho the great salt ocean was on each side. That current of pure fresh water cut straight through the briny deep. So the pure heart, the soul that has the Christ-life like a fountain bubbling up out of the depths, rejoices in love in the midst of hate, abounds in mercy tho surrounded by malice, delights in goodness tho evil raves about.

Neither sickness nor old age nor adversity is able to quench this abounding life. A

friend of mine went to see Mr. Sankey, the greatest of all the evangelistic singers, a few days before his death. Mr. Sankey was himself expecting to die very soon. The good man was blind and weak through long illness. He was glad to meet his friend, invoked the blessing of God upon him, and thanked him for coming to see him. The visitor, after a little conversation, inquired: "Mr. Sankey, does the Spirit of God and the power and truth of religion seem to you as clear and strong as when the tens of thousands were hanging upon every word that came from your lips and congratulating you upon your popularity and success?" He hesitated a moment and said: "It is more powerful. Then there were many distractions. God and I are together now most of the time." When he rose to go the visitor said to him: "You can not do what you did for me on former occasions." "Oh, yes," he said, "I will sing for you." And prone upon his back he gathered all his breath and strength, and tho the voice was weak and the portent of death was in the unearthly pallor of his countenance, a sense of the real power which had made him what he was be-

fore the thousands was felt by the listener. It was a triumphal song which he had composed on his death-bed, and which like almost all his songs had a short chorus at the end of each stanza. You can not imagine such a scene connected with any one on earth except a sincere and joyous Christian.

The famous English preacher, Dr. Dale, came upon an epoch in his life when he was much deprest, and he prayed God to forgive him for the sin of gloom. He felt that his face had been gloomy, and that his voice had been gloomy; and he wanted forgiveness for the gloom that overshadowed his life. At this time he was getting ready for the Easter Day services and there flashed upon him, with new meaning, the thought—Jesus Christ is alive! He walked up and down his study and said: “Jesus Christ is alive!” And, in the glory of that risen life, he went to preach; and his sun never more went down. In the gladness of that resurrection vision, in the glory of that Easter morning, he lived; and his congregation sang every Sabbath morning all the year around the Easter hymn, “Christ the Lord is risen to-day, Hallelujah.”

A distinguished minister traveling in Japan last year was called on by a lady who is a missionary there. She said to him: "I have come to make a sad confession to you. I have come to tell you this—that tho I came out from America to teach the people here in Japan, I have never had a single hour of joy in my Christian life, and," she said, "I feel so ashamed of it. Can you tell me the secret of joy? Can you tell me how to get some gladness into my life? I feel that I can not commend the religion of Jesus Christ to people while I have a joyless experience." His answer was this: "I do not know any secret of joy like this—I am alive in the risen, victorious life of my risen Lord. I can not think of that for five minutes without being glad, without saying good-by to sorrow and sighing."

Thank God, the supreme test of the Christian life is the life itself. Christ is saying to-day as of old, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out!" Now as ever Jesus is saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," and if we open the door, He is as ready as ever to come in and sit at the table

of our hearts and live there with us the life
of love. Some poet sings:

No pictured likeness of my Lord have I;
He carved no record of His ministry
On wood or stone.

He left no sculptured tomb nor parchment dim,
But trusted for all memory of Him
Men's hearts alone.

Who sees the face but sees in part; who reads
The spirit which it hides sees all; he needs
No more. Thy grace—
Thy life in my life, Lord, give Thou to me;
And then, in truth, I may forever see
My Master's face!

THE MIRACLE OF TURNING A MAN INTO ANOTHER MAN

“Thou . . . shalt be turned into another man.”—1 Sam. 10 : 6.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”—2 Cor. 5 : 17.

OUR theme has to do with the two great historic Sauls in our religious history. They were a thousand years apart in the chronological order, and still farther apart in their inner character, and yet they unite in our theme with singular appropriateness.

The character of Saul the son of Kish has always been considered by Bible students a difficult character to estimate. There is a certain obscurity which many men have considered no intellectual searchlight could illuminate to the farthest boundary. And yet it seems to me there is a good deal of human nature in Saul, and that when we are not reaching after anything beyond us, but simply studying Saul as we would one of ourselves, we find that there are a good many men like him to-day. Recall the old story for a

moment! Saul is a young rancher, a great splendid fellow nearly seven feet high, head and shoulders higher than ordinary men. Physically he is good to look at, but he is just that and nothing more. He has no reputation for piety, for brains, culture, or dignity of any sort. His father's herd of asses are lost, and Saul goes hunting through the hills after them. When he and his servant have hunted until they have lost hope, and Saul considers it time to go home, his servant tells him about Samuel, a prophet who does not live far away, who he thinks could tell him where the lost herd is, and Saul, nothing loath, goes by to see Samuel. It throws a good deal of light on Saul that up to this time he had not known Samuel. Samuel was the great prophet of his time. He was peculiarly the representative of God on the earth in that day, but neither Saul nor his father seems to have heard of him. They were so busy breeding asses that they never went to church and knew nothing about God's prophets. Saul did not know Samuel by sight, for when he saw him he said to him, "Tell me, I pray thee, where is the Seer's house." Samuel

answered, "I am the Seer myself. Come with me, and I will tell thee all that is in thy heart." And it was in that conversation that Samuel made known to the astonished Saul that God had chosen him to be king over Israel, and Samuel anointed him to the kingdom. And it was when he went forth from the house of the prophet that it is said, "And it was so that when Saul had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave Saul another heart, and the Spirit of God came upon Saul and he prophesied."

It is well for us to remember here that "another heart" has more than one meaning in Scripture as in other places, and the coming of the Spirit of God means one thing in one place and another thing in another. For instance, the Spirit of God coming upon Jesus when He was baptized in the Jordan and the Spirit of God which came upon Samson when he tore a young lion in his fierce grasp have not the same meaning. Matthew Henry has this to say about the "other heart" spoken of here. He says Saul has no longer the heart of a husbandman, concerned only with corn and cattle; he has now the heart of

a statesman, a general, a prince. When God calls to service, He will make fit for it. If He advances to another station, He will give another heart; and will preserve that heart to those who sincerely desire to serve Him. Saul indeed became another man, but he does not seem to have become a new creature in the spiritual sense. It was superficial. The real heart of the man was never surrendered to God. Saul had his chance. He was God-anointed, and God called to his aid friends whose hearts He had touched, but he did not rise to the occasion, and in his inner soul he seems never to have entered into communion with the Highest.

It is a comfort to turn from this superficial transformation of the lower man into the higher to the oft-recurring miracle of Christianity which is illustrated in Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles. Paul describes that miracle which happens to-day in every land, when he says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." You see the idea is the same as in the case of the first Saul. It is

the miracle of turning one man into another man, but the idea applied to only one man in the first case, here it applies to every man who surrenders himself to Jesus Christ.

The condition of this divine transformation is, "If any man be in Christ." Paul is no doubt thinking of himself. Nothing short of a new creation could describe to Paul the change that had come in himself. When Paul spoke about being in Christ he meant not only that he had come to love Him, but that he had entered into the spirit of Christ, and had grown into such sympathy with the purposes of Christ that it was the very life-blood of his soul. He was like a branch that is grafted into the tree. He had become a part of the tree of Christ's life. This becoming a part of Christ was of course a growth. Dr. Freeman Clark well says that while conversion is always sudden, for it is simply turning around, regeneration is gradual, for it is a growth. Paul was converted in a moment on his way to Damascus. He changed his mind about Christianity. He began a new life. And day by day he grew into the convictions and purposes and spirit of Jesus

Christ. Our Christianity must be something more than belief, and something more than conduct. Your belief may put you with Christ, but it is only your heart's love that can put you in Christ. A creed is like a carriage, which may take us to the place where our friend is, but can not put us into communion with him. But if we are in Christ, we have new convictions. Spiritual things become more real to us. God becomes to us more real. We grow into new affections. A new heart does not mean any new faculty or power of loving, but it means new objects of love. The Bible becomes a new book when we are in Christ. If you stand outside of that great white marble cathedral at Milan and look on the vast windows, they seem dark and dingy. But when you go inside and let the light stream through them, they turn into emeralds, and sapphires, and rubies, and are gorgeous with the forms of saints and angels. So when we enter into the Bible with love for Christ in our hearts and thanksgiving to God for His goodness to us, its books light up with a beauty and a glory of which we never dreamed before.

That which makes possible this new life in Christ Jesus to the most unfortunate and sinful of human beings is that *old things pass away*. And that is the glorious commonplace of our Christian gospel wherever it is preached. Gipsy Smith tells a story of how one snowy night, in Aberdeen, Scotland, he felt somebody tugging at his coat as he was passing through the crowd into the street. And when he got under a lamp-post he looked to see who it was. There stood a little Scotch lassie in rags in the cold, snowy, sleety street, under that lamp-post. He stopt and said: "What do you want, my dear?" She pushed toward him a piece of tissue paper, all damp, where she had had it in her hand and squeezed it a good deal and she said: "Please, sir, I have brought you some candy," and the preacher took off his hat and said: "My darling, why have you brought me some candy?" "Oh," she said, "we have got a new daddy. He has never been sober until Saturday. I have never known him sober, but we have got a new daddy. He is a Christian now. He was in your meeting on Saturday. We have a new daddy and I have brought you part of

my candy!" You see, her father had been turned into another man. Christ had come in and fought his evil passion to the death and made a new creature of him. That had happened to this man which Mrs. Browning, the greatest woman poet in human history, describes in "Aurora Leigh" when she says:

" 'Tis impossible
To get at men excepting through their souls,
However open their carnivorous jaws;
The soul's the way. Not even Christ Himself
Can save man else than as He holds man's soul;
And therefore did He come into our flesh,
As some wise hunter creeping on his knees,
With a torch, into the blackness of some cave,
To face and quell the beast there,—take the soul,
And so possess the whole man, body and soul."

The undying, unconquerable optimism of the glorious gospel of Christ is in our theme. No man's case is hopeless, because he can be turned into another man. Dr. Watkinson, the English preacher, in one of his recent sermons, says that the world wants a Savior more than it wants anything else. He recalls a recent saying of Sir Oliver Lodge that "The superior man to-day does not trouble about his sins, and he troubles even less about their punishment." Watkinson says he supposes

the superior man is the scientist. And he goes on to show how greatly the scientist does trouble himself to-day about our physical ailments and about the microbes that create them. Half modern science is concentrated on the study of disease and the study of medicine; and if the superior man is going to deal with the maladies of the physique, is the superior man going to ignore the moral maladies that eat out the strength and the glory of the race? He well says: You are never going to hush the bitter cry of the race with any kind of rhetorical lullaby like that. "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me, who can deliver me from the body of this death?" That is the cry; and it is a cry that will not down. Jesus Christ is the hope of the race because He can answer that cry. He is in His glory when He gets among lost men; you never see His stature until He gets among the fallen and the lost. Greatness is not comfortable among the fallen, for purple does not match with sackcloth. Fashion is not comfortable; it is too afraid its satin will be besmirched. Science is not comfortable amid the fallen, for while it can work miracles

of transformation in the physical realm, it can work none in the heart of man. Art is not comfortable among the fallen, and it retires as soon as it has taken their portrait. But Jesus Christ is at home among the fallen; He is in His glory with lost souls, lost classes, lost tribes, and lost races, for the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

A traveler tells us that on the Continent he noticed in one of the museums a magnificent piece of statuary. The keeper told him that in troublous days of past generations it was absolutely shattered. It was broken into thousands of pieces, and lay for years in the dust. At last came a clever and patient artist who picked one by one the particles out of the dust. He made it the work of years, and at length restored the glorious sculpture so that now you see it there as lovely and as perfect as it was in the beginning. And what that man did with that shattered marble Jesus Christ can do for a degraded and sinful human heart. Out of ruins that are beyond hope to any human eye Christ can bring forth a new man, created in righteousness.

I have seen somewhere the story of a distinguished musician who ordered a manufacturer of violins to make for him the best instrument possible. He told him to use the best material, take all the time he wished, and use all his skill in its construction. At last the violin-maker sent for the musician to come and try the violin. As the musician drew the bow across the instrument, his face became clouded. Lifting the violin, he smashed it to pieces on the counter, handed the price to the manufacturer, and left the shop. The violin-maker, who was a true worker, was not satisfied with mere pay; his reputation was at stake. He gathered the fragments of the violin and put them together. After he had remade the violin out of the pieces, he again sent for the great musician. This time the frown was not seen; as he drew the bow across the strings he told the manufacturer that he had succeeded at last in making just the kind of a violin that he desired. "What is the price?" inquired the musician. "Nothing at all," replied the maker. "It is the same instrument that you smashed to pieces some time ago; I put it

together, and out of the fragments this perfect music has been made.”

My friends! It is the supreme glory of our Christianity that Jesus Christ is able to take the broken pieces of our lives, that have been shattered by sin, and patch them together by His atoning love and bring forth sweeter music than ever. Do I speak at this time to some one whose life has been spoiled by sin? You feel that your heart with all its hopes and plans has been broken in pieces; that you are like that shattered violin. And you say to yourself, “There can never come any more music of joy or gladness out of my heart.” Oh, I bring you the Gospel of Christ, which assures you that if you will surrender this broken and despoiled heart into the hands of the Savior, He will build it anew, until you shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus, and the sweetest music that was ever awakened from human heart shall come forth from your soul.

Let no one for a moment imagine that it is possible you can be an exception, and that sin has wrought its work upon you beyond remedy. The hope is in this, that you may become a new man in Christ Jesus, with

nature transformed through His divine agency. It is not a mere reformation that is preached to us in the Gospel of Christ, it is a transformation. Dr. Jowett, one of the greatest of the younger English preachers, says that the late Charles A. Berry, who afterward was desired as a successor to Mr. Beecher, dated the beginning of the great spiritual power of his ministry to an experience that happened to him late at night in the city where he was pastor. He was sitting in his study very late. Every one else had gone to bed. There came a knock at the door, and when he opened it there stood a girl with a shawl over her head. "Are you the minister?" she asked. "Yes." "Then I want you to come and get my mother in." Berry, thinking it was some drunken brawl, said, "You must get a policeman." "Oh, no," said the girl; "my mother is dying and I want you to get her into salvation." "Where do you live?" "I live so-and-so, a mile and a half from here." "Well," said Berry, "is there no minister nearer than I?" "Oh, yes, but I want you, and you have got to come." Berry, in telling about it, said, "I was in my slippers, and I soliloquized and

wondered what the people of the church would think if they saw their pastor walking late at night with a girl with a shawl over her head. I did all I could to get out of it, but it was of no use. That girl was determined, and I had to dress and go." At last he went with her and found that the place was a house of ill fame. In the lower rooms they were drinking and telling lewd stories, and upstairs he found the poor woman dying. He sat down and talked about Jesus as the beautiful example, and extolled Him as a leader and teacher; and she looked at him out of her eyes of death, and said: "Mister, that's no good for the likes o' me. I don't want an example—I'm a sinner." And Berry said to Dr. Jowett, with tears running down his face: "Jowett, there I was face to face with a poor soul dying, and had nothing to tell her. I had no Gospel, but I thought of what my mother had taught me, and I told her the old story of God's love in Christ dying for sinful men, whether I believed it or not." "Now you are getting at it," said the woman. "That is what I want. That's the story for me." And Berry turned to Jowett with wet

cheeks and said, "I got her in, and I got in myself."

I am sure that some of you who are hearing this message to-day ought to hear it unto your salvation. To some of you Christ has come again and again, sometimes with great power, and it has seemed to your own soul that the day of your complete redemption was at hand; but you have thrust Him aside. Perhaps you have not consciously done this, but you have been taken up with other things, and Christ has been left till some other time. It may be that some of you who are in the church are not "in Christ" in this high sense which brings you into loving heart-fellowship with Him, and makes your life blossom anew with the graces of the Spirit. There have been times when your soul has been tremendously stirred, and you have been moved to give yourself unreservedly to the noblest Christian life; but the cares of the world have come in, and these holy emotions have passed away, and you are still unsaved. To some of you this has happened not once, or twice, but many times. Life is passing. Your character is hardening into fixt and settled conditions.

Your conduct is settling into the deep grooves of habit. It becomes less and less likely that any great transformation that shall renew the very sources of your nature and awaken you to the noblest life will come to pass. Oh, I would to God that some divine wind from heaven might sweep across your hearts this morning! that the Spirit of Pentecost might awaken your dormant souls so that you might hear with new ears and see with new eyes the opportunities of this hour. Some poet tells us of a dream which came to him of lost opportunities for salvation, which aroused his soul to action. He sings,

I lived once more in youth's fresh morn,
In love with you, unprest by care:
The hours, on beams of gladness borne,
Brought every bliss. Cheer filled the air.
Then Jesus came, and at my heart
So gently knocked I knew 'twas He.
But from the world I could not part;
Time held me, not eternity.
And He—I spurned His love to share—
While I was busy here and there,
Had gone!

He came again at manhood's noon,
When heat and burden of the day
Changed joy to care—alas, how soon!—
And found me toiling in the way.

He knocked the second time, but I
Refused to let the Savior bear
My load just then. But by and by
I turned from toil, in deep despair,
To let Him in. But He, so fair,
While I was busy here and there,
Had gone!

Once more, when age's eventide,
With lengthening shadows for its years,
Tinged care with grief, He stood beside;
The third time knocked, this time with tears.
But earth, which held my life-scarred heart,
Still bound me with its golden snare.
And afterward, when I would part
From all I had, His cross to bear,
He, who for me no pain did spare,
While I was busy here and there,
Had gone!

I woke with pain. 'Twas a true dream.
Behold, He knocked! "Come in!" I cried,
"My heart's Thy home, come, reign supreme,
And with me through my life abide."
He came, in that sweet twilight hour,
My joys, my cares, my griefs to share—
In youth, manhood, old age my power.
And while I still my cross must bear,
He's promised me a crown to wear,
If I am busy here and there
For Him.

CHRIST AND THE WORLD'S LEAVINGS

“The Last.”—Matthew 19 : 30.

“The Least.”—Luke 9 : 48.

“The Lost.”—Luke 19 : 10.

THESE three words, “Least,” “Last,” and “Lost,” were words that were frequently on the lips of Jesus Christ. These are the words, more than any other words in His vocabulary, that mark the majesty of His personality and the divine glory of His mission. Every religion must be judged, not by what it can do with good people, but by what it can do with bad people. Almost any philosophy or religion, economic scheme or communistic program, can deal with good people, with people who are amenable to reason, both mental and moral. Leave out the problem of sin, which breaks down sanity not only in the heart but in the mind, and many a philosophic device which has gone to disaster would have been a glorious success. Multitudes of these schemes fail when they come to deal with the

sinner, and there is where Christ is in His glory. Christ is at home with the sinner, with the man whom education and science can do nothing for, with the man whom the world gives up as a piece of waste, as a burden to be carried. Jesus Christ knows how to deal with these leavings of the world. You can see how clearly Christ perceived that this was the central value of His divine mission in the world if you listen to His message to John the Baptist, who sent to Him from Herod's prison and asked Jesus to let him know if He were indeed the Messiah, or whether he should look for another, and Jesus told them to go back and tell John the things which they had seen and heard, how the blind received their sight, the deaf were made to hear, cripples were healed, lepers were cleansed, devils were cast out, and the poor had the Gospel preached unto them; that is, Jesus told them to tell John, as certain evidence that He had come from God as the Savior of men, not that the best people in the community were listening to Him, that the great statesmen and leaders of public opinion believed on Him, or that the most wealthy peo-

ple were coming over to His side, and therefore He must succeed—no, that was not what Jesus said—but, to tell John that the poor, the neglected, the forgotten, the offscourings, the outcasts, the world's leavings, were coming into gladness, and joy, and hope.

I

I feel sure that one of the greatest problems which confronts us in the world to-day is this very problem of the world's leavings. Multitudes in the world are making great advances, are gathering large wealth and great sources of power, and in our cities that are growing as the world never saw them before, large numbers of people are enjoying a culture and a luxury and a power such as private citizens never knew in the history of the race. But while this is so, it must not be forgotten that there are multitudes of people who are not only being left behind in the race, but who seemingly are being utterly hardened and blinded and lost in the darkness of an underworld into which true spiritual light does not seem to come.

Travelers who have penetrated the upper reaches of the Amazon River tell strange stories of that wonderful region. It is covered by a marvelous forest. The sun's rays seldom reach to the surface of the water and one may go many miles along waterways where it is well-nigh as dark as night, because the sky is almost completely shut out by the mass of vines which interlace the trees and are so thick with leaves. Deprived of the sunlight, all is dark and rank. The damp air is laden with unhealthful vapor, the surface of the water, in places where the current is too sluggish to carry it away, is covered with scum and weeds.

It requires no little courage to explore these fastnesses, for a man really takes his life in his hands, so unhealthy are they. Occasionally, however, one can see the upper portion of the forest, where there is a little crevice in its roof of vines. Above this is a marvelous scene of light and beauty. Birds and butterflies and other gorgeous insects are flying from place to place; flowers of hundreds of hues and shapes are blooming from the plants attached to branch and trunk. While below all is

lifeless and silent, except for bats, and reptiles, and loathsome things that belong to the darkness, above the height, where the mass of vines overshadows the river, nature has created a world of brightness and animation.

To attempt to break through the canopy of vines which hide it from the lower world is almost impossible, because the vines grow so thickly; but some daring and tireless naturalists have penetrated it, and they say that the forests really have two surfaces—the one above this artificial roof and the one below. That which is above is barred from human entrance. Its inhabitants are mostly birds and insects that are radiant with beauty unequalled in the world. In that upper realm color reigns supreme—color of flowers, of butterflies, of birds, radiant in scarlet, in gold, and blue. They tell us that sometimes you can see these bright creatures flit in the cavern below as tho they were curious to see what was there, but not in all their glory as they must behold one another above. Sometimes, as they flit about beneath, they will chance to cross a sunbeam slanting through a hole in

the vegetation; then for an instant they flash into view like an explosion of burning color. It is thus that the great butterflies are seen to the best effect. No one can imagine what a picture they produce in their native haunts as their wings flash and close and flash again in the sunlight as they fly.

Now it seems to me it is something like this that is occurring in the greater world. We are living in an age when there is an upper world of great intelligence, of elegance, and culture, and beauty. And I am an optimist about it, and believe that there are more people living in that realm of sunshine where the light is from the Lamb of God, and has in it the healing influence of heaven, than ever before. But still it is also true that down in the dark shadows of this modern forest of our human life there are multitudes who through poverty and sin, working together, have produced conditions that in some respects seem worse than the world has ever known, for I certainly believe that your heathen of the modern city are much farther away from God and righteousness than savages who have never been touched by Christianity.

As civilization goes higher the pressure is tremendous if it falls upon poor human beings who have failed to keep step and have fallen out in the race.

Some years ago Millet, the famous French artist, painted his great picture, "The Angelus"—two peasants in the field, hearing the Angelus bell rung, bow their heads in the attitude of prayer—a wonderful picture which within a few years attracted the attention of the entire civilized world. Soon after he painted "The Man With the Hoe." Edwin Markham, then entirely unknown, saw in that picture the theme I am studying with you this morning—something of debased and degraded and brutalized humanity ground down under the pressure of our modern life—and sprang by a single poem into a reputation which has grown firm with the years, but he will doubtless always be known as the man who wrote "The Man With the Hoe." Ere we criticize too severely this strong picture we must remember that it is not our American farmer he is depicting, but the man of any land crushed between the glacial sins of the world's selfishness and greed.

How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream?

* * * * *

O masters, lords, and rulers in all lands,
How will the future reckon with this Man?

Now, my friends, somebody must deal with this man and his tens of thousands of brothers and sisters, dwelling in multitudes in our great cities, with smaller numbers in the big towns, and in some lands even among the peasantry of the hills. They are not virgin heathen who are like children. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," and so there are many tribes of uncivilized savages to whose hearts, as among children, the message of salvation and the appeal to righteousness find easy entrance; but these are people who have been hardening in many cases for generations, until there exists a certain vicious hatred toward God and man that seems to be the supreme motive and spirit of the life. Who shall deal with these people?

II

Jesus Christ alone has the daring and the love and the power to deal with these leavings of mankind. Harold Begbie has recently written a book which is creating a great stir in many circles outside of the churches. It has been called "A Clinic in Regeneration." Some years ago Professor William James, of Harvard University, wrote a book purely from the scientific standpoint, entitled, "The Varieties of Religious Experience." Mr. Begbie, a student of Professor James, determined to continue the study of this all-important subject, to do it impartially, not from the standpoint of a religionist at all, but from an earnest desire to find the truth and to determine what force, if any, could reach and save the men and women who have dropt down into the under-world of spiritual darkness until there comes to them no appeal from the higher world of light in which live the majority of men and women in civilized lands.

He pursued these investigations in London, month after month, with as much care as a great chemist would carry on an experiment

in his laboratory. This is the conclusion to which he comes: That whatever it may be, conversion is the only means by which a radically bad person may be changed into a radically good person. Whatever we may think of the phenomenon itself, the fact stands clear and unassailable, that by this thing called "conversion" men consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, become consciously right, superior, and happy. It produces not a change, but a revolution, in character. It does not alter, it creates, a new personality. Mr. Begbie calls his book "Twice Born Men," and he declares that the phrase "a new birth" is not a rhetorical hyperbole, but a fact of the physical kingdom. Men who have been irretrievably bad and under conversion have become saviors of the lost call this transformation a "new birth." It transforms Goneril into Cordelia, Caliban into Ariel, Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle.

This earnest student searched out in the metropolis of the world individual men who had risen from the modern hell of sin and crime into respectability and beauty of character, and with tremendous realism he tells

their stories in his book. He traces them step by step, showing the causes which made them absolutely unapproachable by anything which the law, or science, or human philosophy could do, and then he shows that under the touch of Jesus Christ everything was transformed. Men radically bad, radically evil—a burden to the State, a scandal to civilization, and a disgrace to humanity—become, under the influence of religion, good, honest, industrious, and kind. Homes where children suffer frightfully, where privation and tyranny obscure all the beauty and all the blessing of existence; homes so base, vile, and cruel that they can not be described, become, under the influence of Christ's religion, happy, virtuous, and glad. Vices which degrade men lower than the brutes, which make them loathsome in the sight of respectable people, and fill our prisons and workhouses with an immense burden on the community, under the influence of the religion of Jesus Christ lose every fiber of their power and drop away from the strangled souls of their victims like dead ivy, like an outworn garment. Sins and crimes which retard the progress of the race, which breed

corruption, degeneration, and prosperous misery, under the influence of the religion of Jesus Christ cease to have power over the minds of men and in the instant of conversion appear horrible and repulsive to them.

Now you must remember that this man has been studying up the worst people he could find on earth, people of whom he says: "Science despairs of these people and pronounces them hopeless and incurable. Politicians find themselves at the end of their resources. Philanthropy begins to wonder whether its charity could not be turned into a more fertile channel. The law speaks of them as 'criminal classes.'" These are the people, absolutely the world's leavings, that no medicine, no act of parliament or legislature, no moral treatise, and no invention of philanthropy can reach; and these people, this scientific investigator declares, Jesus Christ, as proclaimed by His humble followers in the lowest, darkest, most damnable slums on earth, does reach and transform into self-denying, holy-living saints and heroes. But, brethren, it is our shame that this book is capable of stirring up so much excitement as it has, for it is simply the old

Gospel of the New Testament. Christ has been transforming every wicked man and woman who appealed to Him from the days of Mary Magdalene and Saul of Tarsus until this day.

I have only time left to urge home upon our own consciences the duty and privilege of doing our part in bringing the light and hope of the Gospel of Jesus to every darkened and sorrowful soul within our reach. Lord Byron, in one of his poems, "The Prisoner of Chillon," tells the pathetic story of a man shut away in a dungeon, who, on the death of his sole companion, was left disconsolate beyond all words. At length, however, he saw that the stones of his dungeon had parted at a certain place and left a rift in the wall. He climbed upward wearily, dragging his chain after him, and looked through. Oh, joy unspeakable! He saw again the green fields and the blue sky. And as he clung there, gazing through his tears, a bird began to sing beneath the wall,—

A lovely bird with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seemed to say them all to me.

My friends, the sweetest privilege that earth holds for you or for me is to lift discouraged men up to that rift in the wall and to open before them the vision of Christ and the sweet life which they may live in brotherhood with Him, for to save men is to make them see Jesus, as Mary Magdalene saw Him. Sir Edwin Arnold puts on the lips of that sinful woman, grown to be a saint, these beautiful words:

This Godlike One,

Whom none did once convince of one small swerve
 From perfectness; nor ever shall!—so strong
 The elements obeyed Him; so Divine
 The devils worshiped; so with virtue charged
 The touch of Him was health; so masterful
 The dead came back upon His call; so mild
 The little children clustered at His knee,
 And nestled trustful locks on that kind breast
 Which leans to-day on God's—Consider, Sir!
 A human heart beat there! a human brain
 Pondered, and pitied, and was sorrowful
 Behind that sovereign brow. The blood of us—
 Of women and of men—cours'd crimson, warm,
 In those rich veins! Nay, and He ate our meats,
 And drank our drinks, and wore the dress we wore;
 And His hair fluttered in the breeze which stirred
 Peter's and John's and mine.

When men, in the discouragement and despair of their sins, catch this vision of Christ,

not only as the Son of God but as their Elder Brother, they, too, will be encouraged to bring to Him the alabaster box of their love and service and will rise transformed into the upper realm of life and being.

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY IN SOULS

“Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”—Ephesians 4 : 13 (Am. Rev.).

JOHN RUSKIN, in writing on “The Veins of Wealth,” says that it is a serious question whether, among national manufacturers, that of souls of good quality might not at last turn out “a quite leadingly lucrative one.”

I am sure we all agree that nothing can possibly be of greater value to the Christian Church than that those who profess to be the disciples of Jesus Christ should be “souls of good quality.” Unless we are careful about our personal quality, as careful about the quality as we are about the quantity, our Christian testimony in the eye of the world will be greatly weakened. And surely the earnest and unceasing determination to seek, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, purity of heart,

saintliness of disposition, spiritual strength of character, and holiness of life will always be found to be, to use Ruskin's quaint phrase, "leadingly lucrative."

There can be no doubt that this is the supreme purpose of God concerning us. A life blameless and faultless, producing the fruit of the Spirit, serviceable and faithful, commending itself to men by consistent conduct, and recommending a religion, vital and forceful, capable of meeting human demands and needs—that, surely, is the handiwork of God which will bring glory to Him, by adding strength to the church on earth and rebutting the sneer that there is nothing divine in religion. This study should be a probe that goes deep home in our own hearts. When something is offered to us as of "good quality," our first question is, "Is it worth the price?" It is well for us to ask that question concerning ourselves at the opening of this study. Am I worth the price that God has paid for me? Worth the price! What price? Calvary! Has God found me worth that? We need to face that question honestly. Can God look upon me and say: "My beloved

Son has not died in vain. The price I paid for your redemption was not too great!" Or must He say, with a Father's disappointment: "I gave my best for you, but I have found you a failure"?

Let us note some of the characteristics of a good quality of soul.

I

A soul of good quality is rich in faith. Indeed, here we have one of the first characteristics of high soul quality. A soul without faith is a cramped, narrow-visioned thing. Ruskin, in a lecture on "The Pleasures of Faith," addressing himself to those without faith, says: "In everything that you now do or seek, you expose yourself to countless miseries of shame and disappointment, because in your doing you depend on nothing but your own powers, and in seeking choose only your own gratification." How narrow indeed is such a life compared to those who see God everywhere in everything, and whose vision is forever rejoicing in the works of their Heavenly Father. The Psalmist says of such souls, "They looked unto him, and they

were radiant." A young girl met Frances Ridley Havergal on a brief railway journey, and said, long afterward: "I am so glad that I saw, just once, that God-satisfied face!" Do we know that richness of faith? If not, it is because we have narrowed our vision to the worldly things about us and do not rise to the communion of faith which would enrich us with all the fulness of God.

The late Charles Cuthbert Hall once told of the wonder and delight with which he saw the ocean tide come up the Bay of Fundy and fill the empty river beds. Through the hours of the ebb the Nova Scotian rivers dwindled and shrank within their banks. Broad and barren reaches of sand exposed themselves; ships listed heavily on their sides, deserted by the feeble stream trickling in mid-channel. Then came the tide up the Bay of Fundy, up from the abundance of the unfathomable sea. You could hear it coming with a distant sound of motion and life and unmeasured power. You could see it coming, with a pure, white girdle of foam that looked in the sunlight like a zone of fire. You could smell it coming, with the smell of freshness, the breath

of coolness, the waft of far-off scents from breeze-blown ocean leagues. You could almost feel it coming, for the heart stirred at sight of it, and the pulse quickened at the rush of it, and the joy of strength arose in the soul. It came from the mighty fulness that could afford to give so grandly; it came from the opulence of an ocean that could spend itself without fear of poverty—that could pour itself out to fill a thousand rivers yet be not diminished; it came, as Matthew Arnold says, “with murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.” It entered the river bed; it filled the empty channel, as one fills a pitcher at the fountain; it covered the barren sands with motion and sparkling life; it lifted the heavy ships, gave back to them their rights of buoyancy; set them free upon the broad waterway of world-wide opportunity. It changed the very face of the land from sadness and apathy and dulness to animation and color and glittering activity.

Thus a rich, whole-souled faith in Jesus Christ and in His divine fellowship and love for man comes into an empty human life—empty because it is simply worldly and narrow

with the narrowness of earth. Into such a life this glorious faith comes to fill it with the very fulness of God. The difference between a soul and a life without faith in spiritual things and a soul and a life filled with the riches of faith in Jesus Christ is the difference between ebb-tide and flood-tide. The one is growing emptier and more hopeless and more desolate, while the other is ever growing richer and more interesting with sparkling fulness of life.

II

The soul of good quality is strong in character and immovable in principle. This strength and stability of character can come to us only when our souls are centered in our relation to God and are bound by the bond of duty. The human soul is a battleground of warring passions until it is surrendered to Christ and is no longer divided because it bows before Him as its Lord. To a soul of the highest quality duty-doing is the greatest happiness. When duty and desire coincide, the soul is pure gold.

Thomas K. Beecher has given us a little

fable of the watch in which the works are at war with each other, complaining and consuming themselves. One of the pieces says, "I am being prest upon by the other parts; I am not permitted any rest and ease; I am compelled to go around and around and around and wear myself out, and all to no purpose." And then a great revelation comes! These grumbling pieces of the watch are permitted to look at the outside world, and they make the startling discovery that, if each part does its work, and does its best, they will move around in harmony with the stars in the sky, and be like them. Then all is changed, and their murmurs of discontent become quiet songs of ecstasy, and ever after, when the owner of the watch puts it to his ear, he hears the glad, contented song, "We keep step with God's stars. We keep step with God's stars."

No character can be strong and stable without a backbone made up of a keen sense of obligation to God, mingled with a consciousness of the presence of God. In Westminster Abbey there is a memorial to Lord Lawrence on which are these words: "He feared man

so little because he feared God so much." There is the secret of a strong character. It reminds one of the little prayer that was found in a Rugby school boy's desk after his death: "O God, give me courage that I may fear none but Thee."

A character like that has a quality which never fails to make itself felt. And the glorious thing about it is, that this is possible to you and to me because it depends not on our own superior powers, but upon the presence of God in us. A group of rough boys were demanding some evil deed of a smaller boy. "I can't do it," said the boy. "You will have to," said the leader, "for we are all against you alone, and how will you help yourself?" The boy was silent a moment and his face whitened a little, and then he replied: "I am not as much alone as you think I am. There are two of us, and the other one is God, who has always been more than a match for all that have come against Him." The leader, who had been bullying him, casting a sheepish glance around said: "Come on, fellows; let him alone. There's no use fooling with a chap like that."

III

A soul of the best quality is warm in love and sympathy and tireless in service for the higher good of others. Some one sings:

The man who wins is the man who stays
In the unsought paths and the rocky ways,
And, perhaps, who lingers, now and then,
To help some failure to rise again.
Ah, he is the man who wins!

Real service will mean sacrifice. We must not expect to be counted followers of Jesus Christ without sometimes bearing burdens that cut into the shoulders until the blood runs. Dr. Jowett, during a recent holiday, was crossing the Alps. His guide-book told him that he would reach a place where the trail would cease, but it gave no further information. He came at last to the end of the beaten road. He wandered around uncertainly for a while, and then he caught sight of what seemed like a splash of blood upon a rock, and then at some little distance another rock similarly splashed, each one he came to bringing into view another farther away. And then he inferred that these were

to be his dumb guides across the trackless waste. He was to follow the blood marks! By the red road he should reach his destination. My dear friends, it is along the red road of sacrifice, of bearing burdens for one another, of helpful, loving service, that we are to develop in ourselves the highest quality of soul.

Dr. F. B. Meyer, during the great Welsh revival, saw, one evening, a young miner come to a crowded meeting. This young fellow stood up and prayed to God in behalf of two of his mates, who were scoffing behind. One of these men immediately arose and said: "No, that is not true; I was not scoffing. I simply said I was not an infidel, but an agnostic, and if God wants to save me, I will give Him a fair opportunity. Let Him do it!" That boast on his part seemed to strike Evan Roberts so that he fell on his knees in a perfect agony of soul. It seemed as tho his very heart would break beneath the weight of this man's sin. A friend of Dr. Meyer's, who stood near him, said: "This is too dreadful! I can not bear to hear this man groan so! I will start a tune to drown it!" Meyer said:

“Whatever you do, don’t do that. I want this thing to sink into my heart. I have preached the Gospel these thirty years with dry eyes. I have spoken to great masses of people without turning a hair, unmoved. I want the throb of this man’s anguish to touch my own soul.” Evan Roberts sobbed on and on, and Meyer said: “My God, let me learn that sob, that my soul may break while I preach the Gospel to men.” After about ten minutes Roberts arose and address the men in the gallery: “Will you yield?” They said, “Why should we?” Then he said to the people: “Let us pray.” The air became heavy with sighs, tears, and groans. Everybody seemed to be carrying these two men upon their hearts, as if the heart must break beneath the strain. Meyer declares that he never felt anything like it. He sprang to his feet. He felt as tho he were choking. He said to his friend: “We are in the very heart of a fight between heaven and hell. Don’t you see heaven pulling this way and hell that? It seems as tho one heard the beasts in the arena.” After that one of the men yielded, while the other, like an impenitent

thief, went his way, but Meyer could not but believe that he afterward came back to God. It is this quality of soul, this deep, sensitive, throbbing sympathy expressing itself in devotion and earnestness, not in speech alone, but in deeds, that we must have if we are to be the greatest blessing to the world.

IV

The most tremendous thing that I have to say to you is that this highest quality of soul is possible to the humblest and most wretched sinner. God is able, through Jesus Christ, to take stones out of the mire and fit them and cleanse them and polish them till they are of the best quality for the spiritual temple. If any man or woman has come in here discouraged and disheartened because of having yielded to sin, I want to lay emphasis on this, the very bed-rock truth of the Gospel.

A little while ago a minister, passing through the ward of a hospital, heard a man groaning and swearing, and turned toward him. But a nurse, seeing it, said: "Don't go near that room, sir. It is of no use. The man

is dying, and he is the most hardened, impenitent creature I ever saw. His language makes us shudder." "Let me see him," was the firm reply. The nurse opened the door of the ward, and stood aside. The man lay on the bed, doubled up in mortal agony. The minister bent over him with eyes full of tender compassion.

"My friend," he began, "there is a golden chain hanging down from heaven to you, and on it, in flashing letters, is written: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

The dying man looked up at him and out of sheer astonishment stopped swearing. "On the chain there is a cross-bar," the preacher continued slowly, "and on the cross-bar is inscribed: 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' Lay hold of this chain, and it will pull you to glory." And with a gentle pressure of the man's hand, he left him.

It was noticed that the man did not swear any more, and late that evening, when the night nurse came to give him his medicine, he

said: "Where is the nurse that was here this afternoon?" He was informed that the other nurse was off duty and was now asleep. The dying man's lips quivered, and a shade of disappointment crossed his face. "I didn't know. I would like to have seen her again. I would like to have said 'Good-by,'" he gasped. "Perhaps you may, after all," answered the nurse, cheerfully. "She comes on duty when I go off." "But I shall not see morning, nurse," he whispered. "Tell me what it is that you want to say. I will be sure to give her your message." "Thank you, nurse. That is very good of you. I want her to say good-by to that minister for me, and tell him Bill Carter has laid hold of the chain. Laid hold of the chain," he repeated, with a manifest effort, as he sank back on the pillow, and closed his eyes, never more to open them on the scenes of earth.

My friend, you who are deeply sensible of your sin, and of your weakness and unworthiness, God is able, through Jesus Christ, to change the whole quality of your soul. Mrs. Burnett has written a sweet and powerful story that turns around an old woman in a

London slum. She had not lived a good life, and, in her wicked old age, when lying on a hospital cot, some visitor told her the Gospel story. She simply believed it; no more than that. One who saw her afterward, at a time of dire need, said: "Her poor little misspent life has changed itself into a shining thing, tho it shines and glows only in this hideous place. She believes that her Deity is in Apple Blossom Court—in the dire holes its people live in, on the broken stairways, in every nook and cranny of it, a great Glory we will not see—only waiting to be called and to answer." And what was the result of this new faith to that old woman in Apple Blossom Court? Why, the result was what it always is—her face shone like that of Moses when he tarried in the presence of God on Sinai. Her face shone like that of Stephen when his enemies declared that it was like the face of an angel, because he had looked into the glory of the throne of God. The same quality of soul will make the same gracious influence everywhere.

O discouraged heart, defeated and disheartened by sin until you scarcely have

courage to try again, I bring you the old, ever new Gospel which promises the transformation of the soul so thoroughly that through Christ's dear love the poorest quality of soul may become the best quality, the very highest and noblest quality that earth and heaven know.

THE SOUL'S IMPERATIVES

"I ought!"—Ephesians 6 : 22.

"I can!"—Phil. 4 : 13.

"I will!"—Luke 15 : 18.

"I have!"—2 Tim. 4 : 7.

ALL great character and achievement depend upon the imperatives which master the soul. A soul without imperatives which control it, dominate it, and dictate to it is nerveless and without power. The difference between a soul mastered by certain kingly imperatives and one that is free from such discipline is the difference between a ship with great engines and perfected machinery driven by a disciplined crew, and a skilful engineer, with a wise, brave captain at the helm, who sends her on her course through sunshine or storm, carrying her cargo of human life to a definite port, over chosen lines of travel across the sea, and a piece of driftwood, a tree upturned by the roots in some tornado, pulled out by the tide, flung aloft on the breakers and carried whithersoever the

sea listeth without purpose or compass or guide. Or to change the figure, the difference between a soul mastered by great imperatives and one who does not yield to such control is the difference between a loyal citizen of the community, who pays taxes, upholds the government under which he lives, earns his bread by the honest sweat of his brow, holds himself to be a responsible and helpful part of the neighborhood in which is his home—the difference between such a man and a tramp without a home, without moorings, who drifts on the highway, knowing not where he will get his dinner, holding himself accountable to no one, and not conscious that any one cares what becomes of him.

A noble life can not be lived without discipline and control. Certain great imperatives must master and dominate us if we are to live worthy of our manhood and our womanhood.

I

The first great imperative of the soul strikes the note of duty. "*I ought.*" That is the first light which blazes forth in every human

soul. God has not left Himself without His witness in your bosom or mine. He has set a light within us which makes us to know that there are certain things we *ought* to do. George Frederick Watts, the great artist, has among his pictures in the Tate Gallery in London, one entitled "The Dweller in the Innermost." This is a figure supposed to represent conscience, with the most penetrating eyes that you ever saw. A brilliant star flashes forth from her forehead, and feathers spread forth from her cloak. In her lap are a number of arrows, whose keen heads must pierce every pretense and bring conviction home to the dullest heart. In her hand there is a trumpet, intended to peal forth its lofty summons to the heroic soul. The effect of the whole picture is to show with irresistible force that right in the soul of man there is a light from which no evil can be hidden and in whose presence excuses and pretenses are of no avail. It is in this illumination that there rises up a certainty of conviction which causes us to say within ourselves: "I ought to do this right thing," or, "I ought not to do this thing which is wrong."

It is obedience to this inner light, sensitive loyalty to this divine voice, which leads to the noblest character.

The sad fact that a great many very religious people are neither righteous nor moral is explained by noting their lack of obedience to this inner conviction, "*I ought.*" Dr. Donald Mackay calls attention to one of Gladstone's letters to the Duchess of Sutherland quoted by Lord Morley in his biography of the great English statesman. Gladstone says: "There is one proposition which the experience of life burns into my soul; it is this, that a man should beware of letting his religion spoil his morality. In a thousand ways, some great, some small, but subtle, we are daily tempted to that great sin." What did Gladstone mean by that? He immediately adds—for he was an intensely religious man himself—"To speak of such a thing seems dishonoring God; but it is not religion as it comes from Him, it is religion with the strange and evil mixtures which it gathers from dwelling in us." And that is the heart of the trouble. A religion which concerns itself chiefly with certain

forms and creed expressions, which separates itself from life, which is formal and official instead of being real and vital, imperils the foundations of morality. There was much truth and wisdom in the advice which young David Livingstone received from his grandfather as he set out for college in Glasgow: "Dauvit, Dauvit," said the old Scotchman, "make your religion an everyday business of your life, and not a thing of fits and starts." And if you are going to do that, the first great imperative of your soul, which you are to follow as you follow an index finger which points along the highway, is, "*I ought!*"

II

The second imperative of a great soul is the conviction that it can do what God requires of it. It is a sad day indeed for any man when he is deluded into believing that the deed he ought to do is impossible. But it is inconceivable that God has made it our duty to do anything which we can not do. The natural, healthy soul responds at once to the conviction of what it ought to

do with the accompanying conviction that it can do it. But here is a man who has yielded to the temptation to do evil until the soul is crippled, and he feels that he is handicapped in taking up the duties of life. Some poet describes a young man praying:

God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice;
That craves for ease and rest and joy—
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go.

If any of you who hear me are weighted down with such a load of sin and defeat, I can only say to you that here is where the Gospel of salvation through the Cross comes in. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." To continue with our poet, you may change your song:

"Yet One there is can curb myself,
Can roll this strangling load off me,
Can break the yoke and set me free."

Paul says, with splendid courage, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And so from any sense of weak-

ness to do your duty, to do that which you are convinced you ought to do, I call you to the divine truth that you need not be alone, but that you may have the partnership of Jesus Christ to help you in the struggle to do right. The secret of all great characters is in this divine fellowship in right doing. Turn to the Old Testament and read some of its sentences: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help"; "I sought him whom my soul loveth"; "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness"; "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." It is in such sentences that you come upon the secret of the sublime spiritual virility in the character of these Old-Testament men. Jacob, David, Isaiah struggled up out of meanness and sin into spiritual majesty and power because they sought the Lord day and night and in their fellowship with Him found the power of God that helped them to overcome the evil that was in them.

III

The third note is a note of purpose. First "*I ought*"—a sense of duty; then "*I can*"—a sense of power; then "*I will*"—a purpose of obedience. Purpose, of course, is closely associated with decision. It is born of an electric shock—a flash of lightning which suddenly illuminates what has hitherto been vague or dark, and the soul, rising up in the new light, says, "I will!" The prodigal had been feeding hogs for a good while. It took a long time for all his splendid raiment to become rags. No doubt he went down through all the experiences of the seedy times that make the stairway between the rich and the very poor. But during all this time his soul was blinded. The true situation was obscured from his eyes. The father's heart was always full of love for him. In the old home there was always plenty to eat. The servants in his father's house were always better treated than he in this far country. But he did not realize these things until suddenly, like a lightning's flash out of a thunderstorm, he saw himself

and his father and his father's house in their true relation, and something in his soul rose up and said, "I ought to go home to father and apologize for my conduct." Then something else rose up beside it and said, "I can at least do that." Then the prodigal himself arose and said, "I *will* arise and go to my father."

But the will is something more than an impulse, it is the steadily going on to do the thing decided upon. Some of you have faced your duty and said, "I will do it!" But when it became hard and unattractive, you gave it up. If the prodigal had been like that, he would not have seen the lights of the old home, nor heard the music, nor tasted the feast, nor felt the kiss of his father. The power to will and to carry out that decision is the highest dignity of our manhood and our womanhood. The Savior says, "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." A great violinist, when he was asked how long it took to learn the violin, answered, "Twelve hours a day for twenty years." He started out by saying, "I will know the violin!" But it was that purpose

renewed and revitalized every day for twenty years that made him the greatest violinist in the world. My friend, you have said, "I will follow Christ." It is not enough to say that once, or to continue to say it for a week or a month or a year, but every day and every hour of life we need to keep fresh in our hearts the supreme vision of Jesus Christ as the Savior and guide and example of our souls, and constantly looking unto Him, be forever saying in our hearts, "I will follow Him, serve and please Him, as the first law of my life."

IV

Then, finally, we have the note of achievement. To every noble soul which has awakened to the imperatives of duty and power and purpose, there will come at the last, as a foretaste of that supreme reward of well-doing, the consciousness of achievement of the highest sort in one's own self. See Paul, a lonely old man, apparently friendless, shut up in a dark dungeon in Rome. Nero, the most sensual and devilish incarnation of wicked power that can be imagined, is on

the throne. He hates everything for which Paul stands, and he has determined on Paul's death. Paul knows all this. He knows that for him there is no freedom on earth but that of the executioner's block. But is he sad? Is he distressed? Is he discouraged? Is he gloomy over the outlook? Does he say, "Nero has won. I have been defeated"? No, no! Nothing of the sort. Listen to him: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Note now the tone of achievement. He is about to depart. He is going on a long journey, but he is not going empty-handed. Life has not been in vain. He has gathered treasures by the way. Listen to what he says: "I *have* fought a good fight, I *have* finished my course, I *have* kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." It is this sense of divine achievement for which I long and pray both for you and for myself.

When Tennyson was a young man, there

was born into his soul the conviction that the greatest thing in the world was the human soul, and we hear him sing:

For tho the Giant Ages heave the hill
And break the shore, and evermore
Make and break and work their will;
Tho world on world in myriad myriads roll
Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul?

The years rolled by, and Tennyson, after eighty years had passed over his head, was still writing about the greatness of the soul; but now he is congratulating himself that with the passing of the years he has vanquished the brute that was in him, and, like Paul, rejoices in the accomplishment of this great achievement. Standing on the edge of eternity, he sings:

I have climbed the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the past
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low
desire,
But I hear no yelp of the beast and the man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a
height that is higher.

A STUDY IN PALMISTRY

“See my hands.”—John 20 : 27.

PALMISTRY in our day is necessarily connected in our minds with the cheap quacks who advertise to tell the secrets of the future by reading the lines in the palm of the hand. But like every other error or fad that lives for a long time, it has in it some vein of truth. You may trace it in India through the proud caste of the Brahmans, back to the earliest traditions of the history of that ancient people. It was called an art in Greece in the days of Aristotle and Pliny. As to its attempt to read the future which a kindly Providence has wisely hidden, it is, of course, a plain fraud. But its assumption that some record of temperament and vitality and character may be determined from the record found in the hand is undoubtedly based on a sound principle. The deeds of a man's life leave their record on the fleshly tablets of the body.

Paul said that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and there are many other men who bear in their bodies the marks made upon them by the devil's branding-irons.

Our text comes from Christ's meeting with Thomas, the doubting disciple, after the resurrection. Thomas could not believe that Jesus was risen from the dead, and when the other friends of Jesus assured Thomas that they had conversed with Him, he declared that unless he put his fingers in the very wounds of Jesus, he would not believe that the resurrection was a fact. So when Christ met Thomas, He took him at his own word, and said: "Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God." You see, in this case Jesus showed His hands to Thomas as His credentials. The nail-prints by which He was held to the cross were sure evidence that He was indeed the Savior. Archibald MacMechan sings of the toiling Christ in his little poem, "His Hand was Rough."

His hand was rough and His hand was hard,
For He wrought in wood, in Nazareth town;
With naught of worship, with no regard,
In the village street He went up and down.

His hand was rough, but its touch was light,
As it lay on the eyes of him born blind;
Or strake sick folks in its healing might,
And gave back joy to the hearts that pined.

His hand was hard, but they spiked it fast
To the splintering wood of the cursèd tree;
And He hung in the sight of the world, at last,
In His shame. And the red blood trickled free.

Our theme teaches the serious importance of the deeds of life that leave their record on the hand. At a gathering of socialists at Geneva, Switzerland, a session was brought to quite a dramatic close by a suggestive incident. The speaker talked much of both the real and fancied wrongs of the poor and the workingmen; but when, in the midst of his graceful periods, this well-drest dandy of a man, whose hands were encased in soft gloves, was asked by a brawny, grimy mechanic to show his hands, there arose a great uproar and the meeting broke up in confusion. You and I are hastening on to the time when the earnest carpenter from

Nazareth—He of the nail-wounded palm—will ask each of us to show our hands for the signs of Christian toil. God grant that it may not put us to confusion!

The Bible makes so much of the hand that I am sure it will be interesting for us to make a study of palmistry as it is treated in the Word of God.

I

The Bible makes it very clear that only clean hands, that are kept undefiled from iniquity, are pleasing in the sight of God. David asks, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?" and replies, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

The superintendent of an organ factory was showing a visitor how organ and piano cases are made. During the inspection they came to the finishing department, where the piano and organ cases receive their last splendid polish before they are shipped. The superintendent explained that a solution of pumice stone and water is used in polishing the hardwood cases. Polishing can not be

done by machinery, but must be done by a man's hand rubbing, and in order that it be done well, the hand itself must be kept as soft as silk. "These men," said the superintendent, "can not play baseball, or take part in any rough sports, or do anything that will soil or harden the hand. Their hands must be kept clean and soft." So David says, if a man is to enter into the holiest of holies in the service of God, he must keep his hands clean, and it is impossible that we can have hands like that unless the inner recesses and the secret chambers of our hearts are kept pure.

II

Hands that are kept clean for God's service are fragrant with good deeds. There is a beautiful touch in the book of Leviticus where it tells how, when the priest went in to make atonement in the holy place, he went with his hands full of sweet incense. Under the Christian dispensation, every true soul is a priest unto God, and if we are serving our fellow men with reverent and honest hearts, in no matter how humble a way, our hands are fragrant with that service.

(1) Merciful service has that kind of fragrance. What beautiful hands were those of the Good Samaritan—the hands that lifted up the poor man who had been beaten and robbed; the hands that placed the poor fellow on his own beast and took him to the inn and cared for him. What lovely hands they were. The fragrance of those hands fills the world to-day. Once in New York City, while waiting on a ferryboat to cross over from New Jersey, I saw a poor fellow drifting by in a boat in the ice-filled river, and he was so stupefied with cold that he could no longer do anything with the oars. He would very soon have perished. Some men who were working on a dock just below the ferry took a long pole with a hook on it and caught hold of the boat. Then they ran a ladder down into the boat, and the poor fellow started, but he was so nearly frozen to death that he could not climb up. Then one of those big, rough fellows went down the ladder and got behind him and helped him. His hands were big and red and horny, but as he tenderly helped that poor, frozen man up the ladder it seemed to me that they were

the prettiest hands I had ever seen, they were so kind and gentle. We must be watching for a chance to make our hands sweet with service. Remembering our debt to the hands of Jesus, we should feel that:

Wherever now a sorrow stands,
'Tis mine to heal His nail-torn hands.
In every lonely lane and street,
'Tis mine to wash His wounded feet—
'Tis mine to roll away the stone
And warm His heart against my own.
Here, here on earth I find it all—
The young archangels, white and tall,
The Golden City and the doors,
And all the shining of the floors!

(2) Faithful hands are always fragrant. It is recorded of Joseph, in the book of Genesis, that when he was sold as a slave in Egypt his master came to have so much confidence in him that he entrusted everything into his hands, and it was those faithful hands that were the secret of the career of Joseph. If he had been faithless in the house of Potiphar, he would never have been prime minister in the palace of the Pharaohs. It was his fidelity as a slave that laid his foundation for triumph as a ruler. And the

fragrance of those faithful hands of Joseph still inspires courage in young hearts unto the ends of the earth. We must not wait until some great occasion to be faithful. Fidelity in a small place is as beautiful as in a great sphere.

Here in my workshop where I toil
Till head and hands are well-nigh spent,
Out on the road where the dust and soil
Fall thick on garments worn and rent,
Or in the kitchen where I bake
The bread the little children eat,
He comes, His hand of strength I take,
And every lonely task grows sweet.

(3) Helpful hands are always fragrant hands. How sweet the fragrance the winds have carried from those garments Dorcas made so long ago. Into how many church circles the perfume of her sewing has come, giving encouragement and inspiration to noble deeds.

A man who was in San Francisco at the time of the terrible earthquake a few years ago, said he saw hundreds of people walking in the middle of the street, hand in hand. Even strong men seemed to feel it necessary, in those dark hours, to have hold of some-

body's hand. So in all the hard experiences of life we need the touch of the hand of sympathy and kindness. My old friend, Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler, now in heaven, once visited in Scotland the church where the famous McCheyenne used to preach. He hunted for somebody who had heard McCheyenne preach. At last he found an old man who remembered the saintly pastor. "Can you tell me," said Dr. Cuyler, "some of the texts of McCheyenne?" And the old man made reply, "I don't remember them." "Then can you tell me some sentences he used?" And again the reply was, "I have entirely forgotten them." With a feeling of disappointment the great Brooklyn preacher said, "Well, don't you remember anything about him at all?" "Ah," said the man, "that is a different question. I do remember something about him. When I was a lad by the roadside playing, one day Robert Murray McCheyenne came along, and laying his hand upon my head, he said, 'Jamie, lad, I am away to see your poor, sick sister,' and then, looking into my eyes, he said, 'and, Jamie, I am very concerned about your own

soul.' I have forgotten his texts and his sermons, Dr. Cuyler, but I can feel the tremble of his hand on my head and I can still see the tear in his eye." The old Scotchman would have agreed about "The Friendly Hand," as James Whitcomb Riley puts it in his little poem:

When a man ain't got a cent, an' he's feelin' kind o' blue,
 An' the clouds hang dark and heavy, an' won't let the sunshine
 through,
 It's a great thing, oh, my brethren, for a feller just to lay
 His hand upon your shoulder in a friendly sort o' way!

It makes a man feel curious; it makes the tear-drops start,
 An' you sort o' feel a flutter in the region of the heart.
 You can't look up an' meet his eyes; you don't know what to
 say,
 When his hand is on your shoulder in a friendly sort o' way.

Oh, the world's a curious compound, with its honey an' its gall,
 With its cares an' bitter crosses; but a good world, after all,
 An' a good God must have made it—leastways, that is what I
 say
 When a hand rests on my shoulder in a friendly sort o' way.

III

But the most serious problem of all our lives arises from the fact that even hands that have been clean and serviceable may

become soiled by sin, until they become loathsome in the sight of God. There are hands that are spoiled by deceit, like Jacob's hands. His shrewd mother covered them with the fresh skins of the slain kid and they deceived his blind father, but they did not deceive God. Jacob paid dearly for that treachery.

(1) Hands may be soiled by greed until ruin lies in the wake. There is no more significant story told in the Bible than that of Gehazi, the private secretary of Elisha. Gehazi liked money and rich things, and the prophet's private secretary did not have a great chance at that sort of thing, so when Gehazi saw Elisha refusing the rich gifts of silver and gold and fine garments that were offered him by Naaman for recovering him from his leprosy, it was too much for him, and he followed after Naaman and lied to him, and came back with spoils. I suppose he congratulated himself at first, but when he was called into the presence of Elisha and the searching eyes of that man of God had looked into his soul, and he went away with the leprosy of Naaman preying upon

him, there was no reason left for congratulation. His greed-soiled hands were white with leprosy.

(2) Hands may be soiled by sinful pleasures. No hands were so strong as Samson's. That young Hebrew giant was an army in himself. But he tampered with his strength in the lap of Delilah until his hands were soiled with impurity and the strength was lost out of them. How many modern illustrations there are of the same thing.

I remember in my boyhood the coming of Oscar Wilde to this country, and what an immense excitement there was about it. In his youth he was a man of great intellectual gifts and of exceptional artistic insight; but, flattered by his friends and elated by pride, he miserably fell. Near the end of his life, after he had been years in prison, he tells the story of his downfall: "The gods had given me almost everything, but I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the

meaner minds; I became the spendthrift of my own genius; and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensations. Desire, at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common clay makes or unmakes character; and that, therefore, what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud on the house-tops. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace." That one illustration ought to be enough for all the world.

But pleasure need not be sinful in itself to be destructive, if it stands in the way of the noblest life that we may lead. A few summers ago a young man lost his life in a strange way on one of the lakes in eastern Pennsylvania. He had taken several persons out on the lake to gather pond lilies.

In reaching for the flowers, the nurse of the family upset the boat and all were thrown into the water. The young man was an expert swimmer, and attempted to save the nurse and the baby, but became enmeshed in the lilies and sank. When his body was recovered, his hands were found bound together by lily stems. So even the charming lily, the purest of flowers, the emblem of virtue, may become an instrument of death. So there are many pleasures in life, in themselves pure and attractive as the lily, but indulged in to excess they entwine themselves about the soul and drown it in worldliness.

IV

Man's greatest hope and the Gospel's dearest proclamation is found in the assurance that soiled hands may be cleansed. Hands soiled by sin can not be cleansed by any human device. They can not be cleaned as Pilate tried to cleanse his when he sought to wash the blood of Jesus from his fingers by washing his hands in a basin before the multitude. No washing of remorse or for-

getfulness will cleanse the hand that has been stained by sin. There is nothing in literature more pathetic than Shakespeare's picture of Lady Macbeth going about in her sleep always washing, washing her hands, and complaining that she could never wash out the bloody spot, and bemoaning the fact that all the perfumes of Arabia would not sweeten that one little hand. But if we are ever to be saved from our sins, our soiled hands must be cleansed. St. James says, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you." Only Christ has power to cleanse the sin-stained hands. But He has that power. One of the miracles of Jesus was wrought in the home of Peter. Christ went home with his friend and found Peter's wife's mother very sick with a fever, and the record of it says, "He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered unto him." Some poet has found in it a message full at once of heart-searching and of comfort:

“He touched her hand, and the fever left her!”

He touched her hand, as He only can,
 With the wondrous skill of the Great Physician—
 With the tender touch of the Son of man.
 And the fever-pain in the throbbing temples
 Died out with the flush on brow and cheek;
 And the lips that had been so parched and burning
 Trembled with thanks that she could not speak.
 And the eyes whence the fever-light had faded
 Looked up, by her grateful tears made dim;
 And she rose and ministered in her household—
 She rose and ministered unto Him.

“He touched her hand, and the fever left her!”

We need His touch on *our* fevered hands—
 The cool, still touch of the “Man of Sorrows,”
 Who knows us and loves us and understands.

So many a life is one long fever!

A fever of anxious suspense and care,
 A fever of fretting, a fever of getting,
 A fever of hurrying here and there.

“He touched her hand, and the fever left her”—

Oh, blessed touch of the Man Divine!
 So beautiful then to arise and serve Him,
 When the fever is gone from your life and mine

Whatever the fever, His touch can heal it;
 Whatever the tempest, His voice can still.
 There is only joy as we seek His pleasure;
 There is only one rest as we choose His will.

Ah, Lord! Thou knowest us altogether,
 Each heart's sore sickness, whatever it be,
 Touch Thou *our* hands! Let the fever leave us—
 So shall *we* minister unto Thee.

THE SECRET OF A TOWERING PERSONALITY

“I have not hid thy righteousness in my heart.”—Psalm 40 : 10.

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart.”—Psalm 119 : 11.

WE have suggested in these passages what to hide and what not to hide if we would build up a strong and righteous personality. I have chosen to put the effect, the result, before the cause. My purpose is to call your attention to the personality itself, and then to inquire into the secret sources of this vital and enduring character.

David utters this first declaration in relation to the story of his rescue by the grace and mercy of God from a pit of sin into which he had fallen. He had gone down into the depths of iniquity. He had fallen so low that the miry clay tugged at his feet and pulled him lower and lower into its filth. In that darkness, amid the horror of his remorse, he cried aloud unto God. And God heard his cry, and brought him up out of the horrible

pit, and set his feet upon a rock, and established him in righteous ways. Not only so, but God put a new song in his mouth, even praises unto God. When David had gotten that far in the story he burst forth into thanksgiving, and after he has exhausted his adjectives in telling of the goodness of God, he speaks for himself, exclaiming, "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation."

Now what did David mean by that sentence, "I have not hid thy righteousness in my heart"? I was reading a comment on this Psalm by Griffith Thomas the other day, in which he says that, to use a New-Testament phrase, it would mean for us to say the same thing to-day, "I have not failed to make confession of Christ as Lord." David is making public confession of God. He wants the whole world to know that it is not David's righteousness that has broken the miry clay off of his feet, that has cleansed him from his iniquitous conduct, that has restored him

again to the joys of salvation. It is not David's goodness, but God's righteousness revealed in David, that has brought about this wonderful result. There is a constant temptation to hide God's righteousness, and to avoid the confession of Christ by our words and our lives. It is often much easier to confess Christ in the church than it is in the store or in the street. It is often very easy to confess Christ in the midst of a warm-hearted gathering of Christian people, but a very difficult and a very different thing to make the same confession in our own home or in our place of business. But David felt that God's mercy had been so signal to him that he would be an ingrate if he did not stand forth to make confession with no uncertain sound concerning the mercy of God. David did more than do right by the Lord, he has given encouragement to poor, sinful men from that day until this, by his humble and open confession. Long years afterward David said to God, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." And David's experience teaches us that men are often made by their failures more certainly than they are by their successes.

A small boy was helping his father to make a path. A wheelbarrow loaded with dirt stood on the hillside above them. It was just balanced as it stood, but whoever lifted the handles would need to look carefully or it would topple over. The little boy, desiring to help, undertook to lift it, but no sooner had he lifted the handles than over went the whole load. As he saw what he had done, he burst into tears. Then a sense of honorable innocence came over him. He had done his best, and did not know what was going to happen. But his father knew, and had seen him set out to lift the wheelbarrow, and tho a word would have stopt it, said nothing. "Father," cried the little fellow, "that was your fault, too. You knew what was going to happen, and you let me do it." The father felt at once the justice of the boy's view and he spoke to the boy in loving recognition of the fact, and of his purpose to let him learn by experience.

God is our father, and he is bringing us up as children. He does not throw us away in contempt because of our weakness, or our failure, or our sins. With more patience than

ever father had for a mischievous son—with more loving-kindness and forbearance than ever mother had for a wayward daughter—the Heavenly Father watches over us, seeking to train us and discipline us, and strengthen us by our mistakes and our failures, and bring us as He did David into that open light of comprehension where we will stand out in the full courage of our convictions at home or abroad, able to say with the Psalmist, “I have not hid thy righteousness in my heart.”

I

In our second text we have the secret of a personality like that of which we have been speaking as an abiding, permanent character. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart.” If a man is to live as the knight of the new chivalry in Jesus Christ, a knight without reproach, not occasionally, but steadfastly, growing in strength and power unto the eternal life, then it must be true of him as of the Psalmist, that the word of God is hid in his heart. Just what did the Psalmist mean when he said that? He did not have the word of God as we have it, but he had some

manuscripts of some of the older books of the Bible, and doubtless there was some reference to them in this "word." And with that reference undoubtedly he meant also the revelation of God to him in his own mind and heart. He meant the message God gave him. By keeping that in his heart he would be made strong to resist evil, and would be kept from yielding to temptations to sin. My friends, here is the source of our power to be the sons of God. We, too, must have God's word hidden in our heart. What does that "word" mean to us? It means not only the message of God in the Bible, but it means also the personality of Jesus Christ, who is the incarnation of God's message to us. So, then, if we are to be the invincible warriors of God in our own day, this towering personality is to be developed and maintained by hiding in our hearts the message of God in Christ and in the Bible.

II

Let us look at some of the results of hiding God's word in our heart. The first result will be peace. In the same Psalm in which we

get this second passage, the same writer says: "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall cause them to stumble." The most important peace for any one of us is peace in our own souls. Better to have war anywhere else than war in your own bosom. Great natures who have been at peace with themselves have withstood years of opposition, and borne all manner of obloquy and shame without loss of courage. Men have gone to the martyr's stake and let their lives go out as a libation before God amid the flames with radiant faces and with cheerful songs of joy on their lips, because tho the battle raged without, within their own hearts there was "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." On the other hand, how often we see those who have all manner of pleasant and peaceful surroundings, whose lives are despoiled and finally broken down in sorrow and shame because there is no peace within their own bosoms. God pity the man who is at war with himself! And that is one of the most terrible things about sin, that a man has a battlefield in his own soul, he is fighting in his own nature. There

can be no strong and splendid character with such a war going on. But if we hide God's word in our hearts, it will bring us peace, peace in our own souls, for as we come to know God through His word, we shall get to understand His will and rejoice in it.

It is through God's word in our hearts that we come to know God as our Father. In one of Charles Reade's novels there is the story of a little child who is handed over to the keeping of another man by her own father. Not that he wants to part with her; but they are poor, and so he gives her into the rich man's keeping, making her the rich man's daughter so far as a resolution can do it, in order to find bread for both. But he stays about where she is; he keeps watch and guard over that little life until it is matured; and the girl, as she grows up, begins to feel that she can always rely upon the unselfish love of him who seems but a serving-man. But her father, as she supposes him to be, is cold, distant, and even cruel. The day came when he repudiated her with anger, selfish and base, because she had brought what seemed disgrace on his name. Then forward

stept the serving-man, and flung his arms around her, saying, with the fierceness of righteous indignation, to the man who had evilly entreated her: "She never was your child!" Then the girl knew why it was that she had always felt such rest, peace, and joy in the presence of the serving-man. She had listened to his language of love many a time, not knowing the speaker to be her father. And so, my friends, many of you have been cruelly hurt by worldliness, and the dust and strife of it has gotten into your heart, and it may be your heart has grown bitter and hard, and you have felt that you have been treated cruelly; but, my friend, the world is not your father. There is a Heavenly Father who speaks to you through the written Word, through the lips of Jesus Christ, and in the still small voice, and if you will hide that word in your hearts and commune with Him, a peace from heaven will possess you and master you, and in turn you yourself will be master of all your powers.

III

If we hide God's word in our hearts, our hearts will be made sensitive to spiritual things, and all our powers of spiritual perception will be quickened. This will come about very naturally, for if we treasure up the Word of God in our minds and hearts, in thought and meditation, it will be a constant inspiration to prayer. No man can meditate much on the Word of God, with all its revelation of mercy and love, with all its wonderful story of redemption, with all its promise of present fellowship and heavenly rewards, without being inspired to prayer and praise. And conversation with God, communion with the Divine Heart, which is the very essence of prayer, can not but quicken spiritual perception. Not only so, but the hiding of God's Word in our heart purifies the heart. The Word of God is a cleansing force wherever it is hidden. Did you ever put a flaxseed in your eye when it was disturbed by impurities, and you wept tears of pain, and that little seed of the flax went about the eye until it had cleared it of all invading substances? My

friend, there is a method as simple as that of cleansing your heart from wicked thoughts and evil purposes. Hide the Word of God in your heart. Day by day give yourself to meditation upon it, and your heart will be cleansed from impure things, and it will make you sensitive to spiritual realities, for Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The greatest test of our well-being, spiritually, is to be found in our power to discern the presence of Christ and to draw from Him that ceaseless enthusiasm of service which can come only from a living faith.

I know of nothing more needed by us to-day as Christians than the cultivation of that spiritual imagination which never can be ours unless our hearts hold lovingly the Word of God. Dr. Arthur Pierson calls imagination the power of "imaging forth." This is the soul's eye—the spiritual vision. The outer eye may be closed or blinded, but the image of what has been seen reappears at will, memory assisting to recall and reproduce. Every image, therefore, set before the mind's eye is a creation of the imagination. Without it

there never could have been Bunyan's immortal allegory, or Milton's celestial poem, or Michelangelo's Moses. All the greatest work of architecture and the most beautiful and glorious things in painting are possible only because of this inner eye. Captain Eads said to the builders of his great bridge across the Mississippi: "I saw the bridge before the first caisson was sunk." So it is when we hide God's Word in our hearts and meditate upon it, the spiritual eye reveals to us the Christ who day by day is our leader in all the walks of life. I have been told that when sightseers visit the wonderful Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, the guides mount a sort of pulpit and preach the tourists a sermon. The sermon consists of only five words, and yet the very lives of the visitors hang on those words. These words are: "Keep close to your guide." To fall back or depend upon oneself for even one instant while within this largest known cavern in the world may mean death. Its pitfalls are deep and numerous. Only the guide knows where safety lies. Even beneath the power of the strongest illumination the darkness is so in-

tense that its wonders and beauty, its fairy-like magic haunts, its myriads of scintillating stalactites are but imperfectly revealed. Side by side with every gleaming glory lurks also death, sure and certain, unless led by a safe guide.

Oh, tourists on the longer journey and even more devious ways of human life, there is only one safe course for you or for me, and that is to keep close to our guides. Nothing is so dangerous to us as worldliness, because nothing will separate us so quickly from Him. Only by hiding God's Word in our heart, by daily and hourly communion, by keeping our spiritual senses quickened and alert shall we be able to cling so close to Christ that we shall have His constant guidance.

IV

The real power of Christian personality can never be exhibited by us or revealed in us except when the word of God is hidden in our hearts. It is impossible for the Christian life to be so nourished without it as to exhibit in full measure Christian manhood or Chris-

tian womanhood. I have seen somewhere the story of a Dutch scientist who has recently completed five years' study in South America. He took some insects from Holland into the rich, tropical atmosphere. He thus changed their environments and put them into friendly surroundings, and he gave them the best food. The most he expected was to be able to modify their coloring, having exchanged the damp, foggy sky of Holland for the brilliant light and warmth of the tropics. But lo! these insects doubled their size; the dim, subdued tints became gay and brilliant. At last he discovered that insects that in Holland crawled, in South America spread their wings to fly and meet God's sun. He began with potato beetles in Holland; he ended with brilliant creatures that lived on the nectar of flowers and only five summers and winters were necessary to accomplish the marvel. And so, my brothers, my sisters, the difference between a life that is sordid and selfish and ugly with evil tempers and a life that exults on spiritual wings, and lives in the atmosphere of hope and love, is the difference between a soul starved upon worldly thoughts

and considerations and a soul that is nourished with the word of God hidden at the root of thoughts and communion.

But some of you say, with a despairing note in your voice: "Your sermon is beyond me. It might do for a spiritual genius, or for those whose life has been so sheltered and protected that they have never fallen into low and sinful conditions. But for me, weakened by sin, discouraged by a hundred failures, there is no hope that I could ever rise into such lofty spiritual communion." My friend, you rob yourself. If you will begin this very day to treasure up the word of God in your heart, to hide it there for secret food and meditation until by aid of your spiritual imagination Jesus Christ comes to be your nearest friend and your most abiding and constant guest, then it can be true that your very weakness, your very besetting sin, may become a pathway to a closer fellowship with Christ, and you may come to know the meaning of that strange saying of St. Augustine, "Oh, blest sin, since it brought me to my Savior!"

John Ruskin, in writing of the Cathedral of

Amiens, tells how in front of the great cathedral there is a statue of Jesus Christ, and on either side His twelve apostles; and below them are written their great virtues. Underneath that, in symbolic outline, that virtue, first of all, in its contrast with its kindred vice, and then in its victory over it. In Peter's case, his outstanding quality is his courage, and below it, sculptured in stone, you see a figure of Peter flying from a leopard—a representation of his cowardice; and then beneath that you see the same figure sitting on a leopard and riding forward to conquest. And the lesson the sculptor wishes to teach us is that by contact with the Lord Jesus Christ that very thing which is a man's weakness can be transfigured into his strength; that very thing from which he fled become the glorious chariot on which he rides forward, conquering and to conquer.

“I hold it true, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.”

THE WAVES OF TIME

(A New-Year Sermon)

“Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer, with all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.”—
1 Chronicles 29 : 29, 30.

THIS very striking and picturesque language describes David as one might picture a boulder in the stream with the current forever flowing over it, sometimes dashing and splashing about it in the gentle play of summer, sometimes with the dark, heavy floods loaded with floating ice of winter, and again with the great swollen current that follows the springtime storms, but ever wearing away and shaping and molding the obstacle in the path of the current. We are reminded of Bryant's poem, in which he describes life as a Flood of Years. In sublime lines he sings:

A Mighty Hand, from an exhaustless urn,
Pours forth the never-ending Flood of Years
Among the nations. How the rushing waves
Bear all before them! On their foremost edge,
And there alone is Life; the Present there
Tosses and foams and fills the air with roar
Of mingled noises. There are they who toil,
And they who strive, and they who feast, and they
Who hurry to and fro. The sturdy hind—
Woodman and delver with the spade are there,
And busy artizan beside his bench,
And pallid student with his written roll.
A moment on the mounting billow seen—
The flood sweeps over them and they are gone.
There groups of revelers, whose brows are twined
With roses, ride the topmost swell awhile,
And as they raise their flowing cups to touch
The clinking brim to brim, are whirled beneath
The waves and disappear. I hear the jar
Of beaten drums, and thunders that break forth
From cannon, where the advancing billow sends
Up to the sight long files of armed men,
That hurry to the charge through flame and smoke.
The torrent bears them under, 'whelmed and hid,
Slayer and slain, in heaps of bloody foam.
Down go the steed and rider; the plumed chief
Sinks with his followers; the head that wears
The imperial diadem goes down beside
The felon's with cropped ear and branded cheek.
A funeral train—the torrent sweeps away
Bearers and bier and mourners. By the bed
Of one who dies men gather sorrowing,
And women weep aloud; the flood rolls on;
The wail is stifled, and the sobbing group
Borne under.

* * * * *

I look, and the quick tears are in my eyes,
For I behold, in every one of these,
A blighted hope, a separate history
Of human sorrow, telling of dear ties
Suddenly broken, dreams of happiness
Dissolved in air, and happy days, too brief,
That sorrowfully ended, and I think
How painfully must the poor heart have beat
In bosoms without number, as the blow
Was struck that slew their hope or broke their peace.

Sadly I turn, and look before, where yet
The Flood must pass, and I behold a mist
Where swarm dissolving forms, the brood of Hope,
Divinely fair, that rest on banks of flowers
Or wander among rainbows, fading soon
And reappearing, haply giving place
To shapes of grisly aspect, such as Fear
Molds from the idle air; where serpents lift
The head to strike, and skeletons stretch forth
The bony arm in menace. Further on
A belt of darkness seems to bar the way,
Long, low, and distant, where the Life that Is
Touches the Life to Come.

The current of life is sweeping over us and we are being influenced by the years as they pass on. First of all, we are influenced in this, that we are growing older. As the current swept over David, molding him little by little from the ruddy shepherd lad to the young hero that overthrew the giant, to the soldier who was the pride of Saul's army, to

the exile, and afterward as the king, ever sweeping him on toward old age, and the sunset, so the currents that are sweeping over us are changing us from boys and girls into young manhood and young womanhood, onward into the high noon of life, and to many of us it is already afternoon, our faces are turned toward the west, and we are looking into the glow of the evening.

But the current is doing more than this for us. Our habits of life are gathering strength and stability as the current sweeps along. Character is building, growing into permanence, under the fashioning power of life. We are growing stronger and truer. Our affections and ambitions are seizing firm hold on high and noble things; or else we are growing meaner, and our thoughts and imaginations, like wild vines, are clinging the more tenaciously to the earth as we grow older. The years can not leave us as they found us. We are either better or worse than we were a year ago. There is no neutral ground. It is not possible that a man can breast the current of life for a year and not be in some way shaped by it, and the sha-

ping depends altogether in its kind upon ourselves.

There are constantly the two magnetisms, so to speak, tugging at our souls. On one side the influence is pulling us heavenward, drawing us upward toward the light and the glory of a good life; and on the other side there is a devilish magnetism appealing to the lowest and the worst that is in us, tempting us downward into a life that is sinful and worldly.

A gentleman who visited the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo gives a very striking description of the electric tower and its illumination at night. It had ten thousand incandescent lamps that gradually came into play. First a point here and there glowed indistinctly, like those pickets of the clouds which catch the zenith beams of the coming day. Then the magnificent façade shimmered like a silken curtain under the rays of a shaded lamp. Then the front and all its pinnacles burst into full radiance; and the tower stood out in the fulness of its celestial beauty, delicate as a snow-crystal, tremendous as a granite peak, and brilliant as the walls of Paradise. No cheers were heard, no clapping

of jubilant palms. The fifty thousand people who waited the nightly scene stood in awe-struck silence, like Moses in the Mount of God, when before him glowed the burning bush, radiant but unconsumed. The place seemed holy ground. Even the most careless seemed to be moved by an emotion too deep for words, only to be exprest in silent meditation.

And yet this gentleman tells us that the tourist who had seen something of the Exposition before the day fled, found himself haunted by thoughts that would not down. He could not drive from his mind the fact that just behind that tower of light lay the Midway with its different story, where on every hand there were the vulgar suggestions that were unholy and wicked. The electric tower reached up toward heaven like God's pillar of fire, but the valley of Egypt, with all its foulness and its unholy lust that takes hold on hell, was at its feet.

Life is like that. These two influences are constantly besieging us as the current of life sweeps over us. If we turn our hearts upward, if we let our affections and our hope and our faith twine themselves about God and heav-

enly things, then we are illuminated by the Light of the World. But if, on the other hand, we turn our faces downward to find our pleasure and our reward in the things of the day, if we give ourselves up to a life of the senses, the light goes out, and gradually we go deeper into the darkness. The current that sweeps over us will mold us into shapes of evil.

These thoughts ought to suggest to us the great inquiry, "Am I being shaped into the kind of man or woman which is pleasing to God? If my life goes on in the way it is now being formed, will I be satisfied with it in the end?" This is a question which ought to come to those of us who are Christians. Is the type of our Christian character what it ought to be? Does our Christian life measure up to God's standard as laid down in the Bible? If we were to look at our life, if it were put like a cloak on another man, or another woman, and worn in our presence day after day, would we look on it admiringly and lovingly, and say, "There is a truly Christian life"? If you draw back sharp at such a putting of it, and your heart sinks with the feeling that your life worn by another

would only meet your criticism and your rebuke, then, in the language of God's Word, let me say to you, "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts."

If we are not living as we ought as Christians, there is just one thing to do, and that is to throw ourselves on the mercy of God and take a new attitude, a right attitude, toward Him and His service. It was said of Spinoza that he was "the God-intoxicated man." It was meant by that that he was full of the presence and power of God, he was carried away with enthusiasm for God. Is it not true that that is exactly what you need? If there is a laxity in your Christian loyalty, and you find that you look upon your duty as a heavy harness rather than as a privilege and a delight, is it not because in your heart and life there is a lack of God? The Psalmist says of the wicked man, "God was not in all his thoughts." Is it not true that the same may sometimes be said of us? Those days and weeks in which our lives are barren of religious joy and peace come because we are thinking about other things and have ceased to think about God. The man who thinks

about God first, who reads his Bible reverently as the day's preparation, who looks to God in loving confidence to guide him and give the keynote to the psalm of his daily life, has an abiding sense of the strong, the protecting, the Almighty God. Give God your heart. Let your heart rest safely in God, and all other things necessary to a good life, to a noble, happy life, follow logically and naturally in their place. How confidently the apostle writes of it, "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Give your heart to God with all its powers until every pulse of your spiritual life shall bound to the fact that you are God's child, and you will not be troubled with doubts or misgivings, all the slavery of doing religious duty will pass away, and you will go forward in the year to come with a sense of victory you have never known before.

To you who are not Christians it is surely a great message that I bear. If the current

shall sweep on, and the year pass over you, facing as you have been away from God, it can only mean sorrow and disaster. "The wages of sin is death," and if you are faced that way, some day you must arrive in despair. For you, too, there is only one hope, there is only one wise thing to do, and that is, on this last night of the old year, to turn from your sins, to turn from every evil way, to turn toward God through Jesus Christ your Savior. To go on as you are means ruin. To turn now means salvation. Get a motto from Paul. He says: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

What is needed for you is some electric shock of the divine spirit that will electrify your will and give you power to take hold here and now of the divine life. Many a young man fails in business life because he never takes hold. He thinks about it, he meditates on a career which is within his reach, and which he has ability to perform with honor. But he dreams about it, and

waits, neglecting opportunity after opportunity, until the current of life sweeps it all away, and his life is wrecked. Just alongside is another man with, it may be, not as much ability, but when the thread of destiny sweeps within his reach, and he sees his chance, he lays hold upon it with both hands, and makes a success. It is like that with the salvation of your soul. There is perhaps no one here to whom I can say any new word about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or the plan of salvation in His name. You have been brought up in a Christian land, and you have been hearing about Christ all your life. In a sort of vague way you have been expecting all these years that the day would come when you would give yourself to a Christian life. But the years have passed over you; opportunity after opportunity has gone by; life does not grow more simple, but becomes more complex and more perplexing as age creeps on. O man, O woman, in God's name let no more chances go by! But on this last night of the old year heed my cry, as in the language of the Bible I shout it in your ear, "Lay hold! Lay hold on eternal life."

THE SWEETENING OF THE HEART

“Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you.”—
Hebrews 12 : 15.

OUR text comes to us in the midst of the aftermath following the author's wonderful roll-call of the heroes of faith. Turning from those landmarks that stand like mountain summits along the path of history to tell where the men of faith, the friends of God, have lived and labored, he exhorts the people to whom he is writing to thank God and take courage. He calls on them to be heartened by the testimony of these splendid lives. And then he urges them to be watchful against certain things which poison the spirit and embitter the soul of man.

We could have no greater theme for study than this, for it is the inner life which is of supreme importance. Samuel Johnson used to say that the fountain of content must spring up in a man's own mind; and he who has so little knowledge of human nature as to

seek happiness by changing anything but his own disposition will waste his life in fruitless efforts and multiply the griefs which he proposes to remove. The center and burning core of our life is the heart, with its hopes and fears, its ambitions and its purposes, its struggles heavenward and its slow drifting toward sin, its infinite possibilities of purity and happiness and its endless craving after peace. God judges us by the heart and we, too, must judge ourselves by our hearts. The core of our theme is in this, that there are certain things which embitter the heart, and if we are to keep the heart sweet and wholesome, the source of every good and pure word and deed, we must take them into account. Let us examine some of the things which are likely to make the heart bitter.

I

The writer of our text teaches us that if we would shun the danger of bitterness, we must get rid of our *besetting sin*. Now, a "besetting sin" is one that jumps with our inclinations. It is one which either by inheritance or by

much practise has come to be constantly on the watch for us, and such a sin is sure to be a root of bitterness which will embitter the heart and turn the whole life sour unless it is destroyed.

I was reading recently a very remarkable book by Mr. George R. Sims, with the rather sensational title of "The Devil in London." In this book Mr. Sims, with rare literary ingenuity, uses Satan as a showman, and in one case the Prince of Darkness takes his tourist into one of the most magnificent of London hotels, saying to the man whom he leads: "This is a drink case. The man in the next room is an American millionaire. He has to be guarded night and day. He has tried to commit suicide twice. The family have gone to the theater. The nurse has left him for a minute—she thinks he is asleep. Hush!" A man about fifty, with wild eyes and features that told their terrible tale, came creeping stealthily from the inner room. He had on a long dressing-gown, and as he walked he trod on the front of it and stumbled. He put out his hand and grasped a chair to steady himself. For a moment he stood trem-

bling and gasping. Then, glancing nervously around, he went to the table on which the remains of the feast were scattered. Muttering incoherently, he picked up glass after glass in which a few dregs of wine remained. Greedily he swallowed these dregs. When the glasses were emptied, he searched everywhere for more. Suddenly he saw that a liqueur glass stood half hidden by a serviette. The poor wretch seized it, looked at it, and saw that a few drops of brandy still remained in it. With a shriek of joy that was hardly human he lifted the glass and let the few drops of spirit trickle into his mouth. Then, with a sigh, he shuffled feebly back into the bedroom. "That," said the devil, "is one of the richest men in America. He is a dipsomaniac. To drink till he loses his reason is all that he cares for in life, and for his life's sake the drink he madly craves for has to be denied him."

The terrible thing about this is that this case is known to be drawn true to an actual life incident, telling the story of a man who had as great an opportunity for usefulness and happiness of the noblest kind as can be

given by our modern civilization. And yet that was the bitterness to which he came. Let no one imagine that that particular besetting sin has a monopoly of making the hearts of men and women bitter. Ah, no! Envy, jealousy, the mere pursuit of pleasure without regard to the higher joys of the spirit, bring about equally as terrible wreckage to multitudes of others. The peril of a besetting sin, and, indeed, of all sin, is that it dulls spiritual perception. A silk thread stretched across the glass of the astronomer's telescope will entirely obliterate a star in the heavens, and so it is true that often a sin which seems as insignificant as a gossamer thread will hide the Star of Bethlehem from the sinner's vision, and there can be no real sweetness of the heart without a vision of Jesus Christ.

The bitter heart loses its bitterness when it really catches a believing vision of Christ as a Friend and a Savior. John Bunyan had the same besetting sin as that which embittered and tormented this man. He was not only drunken, but profane, pleasure-loving, dissolute. But one day he caught a vision

of Jesus as the divine Savior, and he forsook everything to follow the Master with such fidelity and love that he not only stirred all England, but his heart became the sweet flower-bed of the noblest and most fragrant dreams to be found in the literature of his time, and he exhales sweetness to this day, and shall, till time shall be no more.

John B. Gough had a heart equally as bitter, and had reached a wreckage as terrible, when a glimpse of Jesus transformed him, and he lost his bitter heart and gained in place of it a heart so sweet and loving that he charmed multitudes all around the world out of their sins and dissipations.

II

We must look at Christ from another angle of vision if we would sweeten the heart in trial. Our author urges upon his readers the necessity of "looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that hath endured such gain-

saying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls." When we are tempted to bitterness because of trying experiences, nothing will sweeten the heart quicker than to take a close look at Jesus Christ. Have you lost money or do you fight a constantly losing battle against poverty, so that you are not able to give the comforts that your love longs to bestow on your wife or your children, and your heart is getting bitter about it? Then take a look at Jesus. He was King of kings, yet how was He born into the world? Perhaps some of you in traveling abroad have been at the great castle at Pau in the south of France, and have seen there, in a magnificent chamber, a very luxurious, wonderful thing that swung from side to side when touched ever so slightly. It is like a great tortoise-shell. It was meant to be a cradle for a prince, that great prince who was afterward Henry IV. of France. That was the preparation that was made to rock the little French prince when he came into the world. But when Jesus came to our world for us, tho He was rich, yet He became poor, and His cradle was a manger in a cattle-

stall. Not only did He become poor in the sense of belonging to a very poor family, but all through His life He chose the part of sacrifice and suffering that He might bring something of comfort and help and peace to others. I can not understand how any poor man can take a close, steady look at Jesus Christ without losing the bitterness out of his heart and feeling something of the divine sweetness of Jesus coming into it.

Have you been trying to do right and to stand for righteousness and yet have been misunderstood and opposed and abused until bitterness has sprung up in your heart? Is it not a common temptation, a temptation that comes to men of noblest purpose and sublimest courage who are fighting for the holiest causes? One of the most regrettable things about the history of the fight for the overthrow of slavery in America, as about the fight for the overthrow of the liquor traffic, is that men of pure purpose and noble courage and heroic devotion often become bitter in their hearts, and not only lose their own joy but lose their power for good in blessing mankind. My brother, the cure for that bitter-

ness is to consider Jesus Christ. Look at the Savior, see how He was opposed, how He fought against odds, how He went His way against sore abuse to the cross, and yet maintained His sweetness of heart and took His soul back undefiled and without bitterness to the presence of the Father in heaven.

There is still a deeper source of bitterness to many souls which comes from a consciousness that life is passing, age is coming on apace, and the character which is stiffening itself into shape as a finality is far inferior to that which we anticipated in our childhood and youth. There can be no bitterer heart than that which has cherished dreams and visions of coming to old age with a beautiful, ideal character; with a gentle, tender nature; with a sweet, sensitive spirit; with a charming disposition, and has failed, and feels keenly and bitterly that sense of defeat. I suppose there are none of us who are really with deep, serious purpose seeking to live the good life who have not ever and again found ourselves suffering more or less keenly such an anguish. Dear friends, there is one certain cure for that bitterness. We must come closer

to Jesus Christ—so close that we can hear the throbbing of His heart; so close that we look into the depths of His eyes; so close that we can see the expression of His countenance. If we will bring ourselves to live in that association, the heart shall lose its bitterness in the consciousness that we are becoming like Him.

It is a fact often remarked, and all of us have noted such instances, where an old man and his wife, who have lived and loved together for perhaps fifty years, come to appear very much alike; the same expressions play upon their faces; the same tones are detected in their voices; their habits of thought and their trains of ideas follow the same lines; and even their features seem to have grown into the same mold. Robert Browning must have had this thought in his mind when he wrote:

All love assimilates itself to what it loves.

And Tennyson illustrates the same idea in another way when he says:

“For love reflects the thing beloved.”

Now this applies to our hearts in our relation to Christ. If we love Him and live with Him in tender association, the sweetness of His heart will pervade and master our own. If I speak to any whose hearts are restless and uneasy and bitter with the sense of defeat, I can only call you to the Savior's presence. There only is the certainty of sweetness and of rest. The poet sings:

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west;
And I said in under breath, all our life is mixt with death,
And who knoweth which is best?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west;
And I smiled to think God's greatness flows around our incom-
pleteness—

Round our restlessness, His rest.

Dryden, the English poet, used to say that he felt always contented and quiet and restful when he sat near a statue of Shakespeare. It was his way of claiming kinship with the great dramatic poet. And, my friend, we may enter into kinship with Jesus Christ. If day by day we so guide our reading, our meditation, our fellowships, and our prayers, we may have the vision of Jesus Christ that will cause His peace to radiate upon us and the sweetness of His nature to transform our own.

III

The author of our text gives as another reason for bitterness—a wrong view of the purpose of discipline in our lives. He says, “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons,

My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord,
Nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him;
For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,
And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?” And from this he reasons, “All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness.” Now, the author’s argument is that if we look upon the providential discipline of life simply as arbitrary hardness, coming as from some cruel fate, the heart gets bitter. And how often is that the case. How often when

sickness or sorrow or trouble of any kind comes we are tempted to become hard and bitter in our spirit. Is it not always because we look wrongly at the purpose of life? If we take into consideration that we are here in our probation as children getting our education, being trained under the divine love for an eternal career more splendid and more glorious than anything we can yet conceive, will it not sweeten our hearts and make it impossible for this bitterness to grow up there, marring not only our happiness but our characters? I came across, in one of my English papers the other day, a little poem getting its theme out of the changing of that word "Disappointment" into "His Appointment," which seemed to me not only very ingenious, but to throw illumination on this phase of our theme. The poet sings:

"Disappointment—His appointment".

Change one letter, then I see
That the thwarting of my purpose
Is God's better *choice* for me.
His appointment *must* be blessing,
Tho it *may* come in disguise;
For the end from the beginning
Open to His wisdom lies.

"Disappointment—His appointment":

Whose? The Lord's who loves me best,
Understands and knows me fully,
Who my faith and love would test.
For, like loving earthly parents,
He rejoices when He knows
That His child accepts unquestioned
All that from His wisdom flows.

"Disappointment—His appointment":

No good thing will He withhold;
For denials oft we gather
Treasures of His love untold.
Well He knows each broken purpose
Leads to fuller, deeper trust,
And the end of all His dealings
Proves our God is wise and just.

"Disappointment—His appointment":

Lord, I take it then as such,
Like the clay in hands of potter,
Yielding wholly to Thy touch.
All my life's plan is Thy molding,
Not one single choice be mine;
Let me answer unrepining,
Father, "Not my will, but Thine."

"Disappointment—His appointment":

Change the letter, then, dear friend,
Take in cheerful acquiescence
All thy Father's love may send;
Soon will faith be lost in vision,
Then in glory thou shalt see
"His appointment," and that only,
Was the right way home for thee.

IV

Another prolific cause of bitterness of heart is suggested to us by the author of these paragraphs in two different illustrations. First, in the exhortation to "Follow after peace with all men." Strife is ever born of selfishness. Men strive when each is determined to have his own way. The other suggestion is in the reference to Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage to feed himself when he was hungry from the hunt. He could do without the blessing of God, he could do without the higher spiritual things, but he must have his mess of lentils. At the root of it all, it was selfishness that lost him his birthright, and what a bitter heart it brought him in the end! The apostle tells us that tho he afterward sought an opportunity to repent, with tears, yet he failed. Now, the cure of this sort of bitterness is revealed to us in this other suggestion which we have given in connection with the two I have mentioned, where the writer of our text urges, "Lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees." And that is one of the

most efficient sweeteners of a bitter heart and one which is always within reach of every one of us. For no matter how poor or weak we are, we may in some way help some one else and in so doing sweeten our own hearts. Honestly seeking to help another, from pure and generous motives, lifts us out of selfishness into the very noblest spirit of human living.

Dr. W. C. Gray, the great Presbyterian editor, a year or two before he died, made a visit to Alaska, and while there had his first vision of snow mountains rising to what seemed an incredible height from the shore of the sea. He declared that it awakened in him something that had been sleeping for years, for always. He felt that his nature had been like an unfolded flower, unconscious of what was hidden in itself. He was impressed with the fact that the dazzling majesty of the splendid snow mountains did not overawe him. On the contrary, he rose to their height and to their grandeur, and was enraptured by communion with them. He understood what they said, tho he could not translate it into words, and he came away with the feeling that we underrate our own

capacities; that we are constituted and constructed in a far larger mold than we usually understand; that we are much greater beings than we are accustomed to estimate ourselves and others. And, my friends, it is only when we rise out of selfishness into the clear air of generosity and helpfulness that we can come into that spirit of lofty communion with Jesus Christ which will give us the perfectly sweet and wholesome heart.

Some years ago an American lady, possessed of abundant means, and singularly without family ties, to whom sorrow and failure had come most bitterly, went to live in Paris. She determined that she would cure the sorrow and bitterness of her heart with amusement and distraction. Her wealth and her position made it possible for her to drain the full cup of social excitement. Some years passed in this way when at last, weary and heart-sick and despondent, she sat down and wrote to a classmate, a distinguished American of large experience and wisdom. She told him in this letter that while she was the freest woman in Paris, she was the most wretched; she was surfeited with pleasure, yet sinking

deeper into despondency every day. She closed her letter as the writer of Ecclesiastes closes his summary of pleasure-seeking: "What more can I do than I have done? What more can I seek that I have not sought? And lo, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." This was the wail that came from this woman whom multitudes would have envied.

Her friend felt that it was a desperate case, one which worldly remedies could never reach. An unrest that an affluent fortune could not assuage would certainly not be stilled with twice that fortune. Music, and all that world of entertainment suggested by it, had lost its power with her, as it did with Saul before her, and as the wicked king threw the deadly javelin at the musician who had no longer skill to charm him, so this miserable woman loathed the refined and elegant amusements that had lost their power to interest her.

Her correspondent determined upon a radical cure. He felt that for her, as, indeed, for every one, there was only one cure, and that was to set her feet to following the track of Him who went about doing good. Getting had ceased to give her comfort; there was only

one hope left, and that was in giving, and so, prayerfully and earnestly, he wrote to her that she had been seeking for happiness in the wrong quarter, that the Pearl of Great Price was not to be found among the goldsmiths' shops of Paris, but among the hovels of the poor.

The sequel to the story is very beautiful, for this wise friend tells us that the wretched woman took his advice, and put forth the hand of kindness and loving helpfulness, and all her unrest and the deadly fever that was consuming her was healed. She gave herself, and freely from her abundant means, to the ministries of mercy for which in every great city there is such constant need; and ere long she wrote to her friend from an overflowing heart that a new sweetness and sunshine filled all her world. It was the sunshine reflected from the faces of the poor children whom she had helped and blest by her ministrations. Like the good man of old, she found that the eye that saw her blest her, and the ear that heard her offered a prayer for her happiness, and no music that she had ever listened to in concert or opera had given her a joy like that.

My friends, this is the open secret of happiness; it is the highway to a sweet and peaceful heart. It means happiness and peace now and forever. Jesus Himself has made known to us that it is the kind of gladness that will be at a premium in the great day of accounts. "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? Or athirst and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

GOD'S REWARD FOR LOVE

“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.”—Psalm 91 : 14-16.

WE MAY see in this text what God thinks of love. We are told what the divine heart is willing to do in response to those who have set their love upon God. We carry the credentials in us that we were made in the image and likeness of God, for in spite of all our sins and all the havoc that sin has made with us, in the elemental things we know how to understand God. We do not wonder that God cares more for love than anything else, for it is more than anything else to any wholesome man or woman among us. The touch of love is what gives beauty and attraction in our eyes. The features may not seem beautiful to others but love makes them beautiful to us. I was dining with some friends on a cattle ranch a while ago, and the

host, the father of the family, was being teased a little about his appearance. While a noble fellow, of lovable personality, he was by no means a handsome man. During the conversation his little son, only a baby in dresses, managed to empty his mouth of food sufficiently to say, in the sweetest simplicity, "My papa looks pretty to me." Some poet sings the same thought:

Time may set his fingers there,
 Fix the smiles that curve about
 Her winsome mouth and touch her hair,
 Put the curves of youth to rout;
 But the "something" God put there,
 That which drew me to her first;
 Not the imps of pain and care,
 Not all sorrow's fiends accurst,
 Can kill the look that God put there.

Something beautiful and rare,
 Nothing common can destroy;
 Not all the leaden load of care,
 Not all the dross of earth's alloy;
 Better than all fame or gold,
 True as only God's own truth,
 It is something all hearts hold
 Who have loved once in their youth

That sweet look her face doth hold
 Thus will ever be to me;
 Joy may all her pinions fold,
 Care may come, and misery;

Through the days of murk and shine,
Tho the roads be foul or fair,
I will see through love's glad eyne
That sweet look that God put there.

Since we feel like that, it is not hard for us to understand how God feels about those who fall in love with Him and pour upon Him their hearts' affections. There are some wonderful promises here, telling what God will do for those who give Him their love.

I

There is the promise of deliverance. And when God makes a promise of deliverance it always includes the deliverance from sin, a deliverance from the dangerous and deadly powers of evil. And, indeed, it is only through our love that God is able to give us this deliverance. I read recently of an interesting experiment that was performed to prove that light loses its actinic power at low temperature. A celebrated scientist took a number of photographic plates, equally sensitized, and some of them he painted with liquid air; and air, you know, will liquefy only at a very low temperature. He imparted this low tempera-

ture to the sensitized plates, and they were exposed, equally with others which had not been so treated, to the rays of the sun. It was found that in low temperatures those plates had not actinic power of response to the rays of the sun. And so an unloving, cold heart which has no warm flow of love for its Lord is incapable of receiving the impressions and ministries and teachings of His Spirit. The unloving heart is a narrowed heart, the unloving life is a restricted life; but the loving life is the largest life into which God can bring us. And God can only give us this large, splendid life, delivered from sin and evil, in response to our love. But, thank God, through love He can give us freedom from sin.

A young English army officer came to a distinguished minister not long ago, and told him the story of his falling into sin and into a dissipated, evil life. He also told the minister how he now loathed that life. He told how there had come into his life the love of a good woman, and as fire burns out dross, so a pure human love had begun to purify that man's life, and he said to the minister: "Sir, I want

to know something now about the love which I have heard you proclaim, for if this other is but a reflection of it, that is a love which can make me a clean man."

Nothing liberates man from selfishness so much as a pure and worthy love.

Self is the only prison that ever can bind a soul,
Love is the only angel that can the gates unroll,
And when he comes to call thee, arise and follow fast,
His way may lie through darkness, but it leads to light at last.

One of our modern novelists has a story of a man who was a drunkard. He loved a noble woman, and he married, and under the strength of love he broke the power of his snare and kept from the drink for twenty years, and then, when his wife died, and all the world crumbled under his feet, he went back again to the pit from which he was dug, and, says the writer, commenting upon the story, "Human nature can be checked, human nature can be developed, but it can not be changed."

Ah, that is just where our novelist is at fault. It is the supreme glory of our Christianity that when a man sets his heart in love on God through faith in Jesus Christ

his heart becomes so sensitized that the divine love is able to set in his affections and ambitions such pure and noble pictures that a poor river-thief like Jerry McAuley or a jail-bird like Hadley may become saints with hearts and lives full of all beautiful and charming spiritual graces. If you should ask me how God does this, you could soon confuse me with your questions. But the fact is beyond question.

In my young manhood I used to live up in the great inland empire of Washington and Oregon, and I have seen the night shut in with the thermometer below zero, with a foot of snow on the ground, frozen so solid one might walk on top of it. And as you looked out into the moonlight before you went to bed, as far as the eye could reach there was the hard glittering of the frozen plain. But in the midst of the night I have been awakened with a sense of suffocation, and thrown open the windows and the doors to get air and relief. What had happened? A wind which they call "the chinook" had begun to blow. It is the soft Pacific wind. In a few hours the grip of the frost was unloosed, the ice had melted,

and little rills of joy were singing on every hillside. The power of winter was broken and the birds caught at the prophecy of spring-time and sang their sweetest songs. Now, Jesus Christ says the deliverance of a soul is like that. A man has been held in the grip of evil and sin, but under some gracious influence the heart is softened, the conscience is awakened, his sense of good is quickened, the whole man is moved heavenward. It is the wind of God. In Christ's words, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

II

There is the promise of safety and protection. God promises to the man that loves Him, "I will set him on high because he hath known my name." All the old walled towns and castles and fortresses were built on high points so that they might be easily protected from enemies who would creep up against them. If you have traveled abroad, you have noticed this in Scotland and in Germany,

wherever you have visited the famous old castles. They were built on high. So God says He will put the man on high and he shall have protection who remembers His name. How we are like God in delighting to have people know our names. Since I came here among you, I have been at my wits' end to gather into my memory and hold fast all the names you have given me, and I notice that when I do not remember the name, while you are inclined to be very polite and charitable about it, there is always a little sense of disappointment, and when I do remember the name, it gives an added pleasure. So God says that He appreciates it that we know His name, and give Him our love, and in response to it He will set us on high. There is no wall so high or strong as the purity and the innocence that comes from such a relation to God.

A Christian lawyer once told the Rev. F. B. Meyer of a very memorable incident in his own experience. He was employed as a clerk by an influential firm of lawyers who had a considerable number of clerks. Their conversation, when they were together, was very coarse and immoral. One morning a young

boy was introduced to the office whose pure face and clear eye bore witness to the sort of home from which he had come and the disposition which characterized him. After a while the conversation among the clerks resumed its usual channel, pouring along its foul and slimy course. The boy's face flushed and his eyes brimmed with tears. "What's the matter, youngster?" sneered one of the older men. "Do you want your mother?" This attracted the attention of the head clerk, who kindly inquired if he was feeling ill. "No," said the boy, "I am all right; but I wish they wouldn't talk like that." The words seemed to awaken a long-silent chord in the heart of the chief; and, turning to the rest, he said, "Gentlemen, the boy is right, and I must request you from this time on to refrain from any conversation which is likely to soil the pure mind of an innocent boy." The lawyer who related this incident to Mr. Meyer told him that that scene wrought a permanent reformation in the daily atmosphere of that office. God set that boy on high and protected him.

III

We have also in this passage the promise of conversation with God. God says of the man who loves Him, "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." These psalms of David are largely prayers, sometimes offered in joy and thanksgiving, and often springing up in appeal out of the depths of trial and sorrow. On one occasion David says, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee." Some one says the Bible is the sorrowful man's book. It shows that the greatest souls who ever lived have been in the depths; when we are there we are in great company. If we are wise, we will talk out our trials and our sorrows with God face to face. If you think God is not treating you fairly, say so, but say it in the quiet of your own room, to God, face to face, and do not say it in the street or in the newspaper. I like the way David prayed, and the way the old saints prayed, when they said just what was in their hearts to God and He answered them. Never cherish a grievance in your heart against God; never go about grouchy against the Lord. He is not afar off; He is

near by, nearer than your nearest neighbor, and if you really love Him, you may call upon Him and talk to Him as simply as a child talks to its mother, and He will answer you in tenderest tones of love.

The reason so many of us go weak and trembling and without moral courage is that we are not keeping our tryst with God. It is the temptation of men as they get wise or rich or strong to cease the childlike simplicity of their prayers and try to be self-sufficient. Nothing shows our weakness and lack of wisdom more than that. The only perfect Life that ever lived in our human body, whose heart was pure, and who never cherished one single evil thought, whose deeds were holy, and whom no man of His day or in all the ages since has ever convicted of sin—this Man, the spotless Christ, felt the deep need of the help of the Heavenly Father, and sought the mountainside to pray. The Son of man knelt in humblest conversation with God. What folly for us to think we can live noble lives without any help from God! He who was strong enough to bear our sins and sorrows felt far greater need of help than we,

who sorrow and who sin. I fear none of us appreciate at its full value the precious privilege of prayer. There is the secret of the perfectly charming life. There is the secret of inexhaustible courage. There is the secret of the strength that will never give way. God will converse with the man who loves Him and in that conversation is everlasting joy and strength.

IV

God promises companionship to the man who loves Him. Not only companionship when he is happy and glad, when he is young and prosperous, but He says, "I will be with him in trouble." How beautifully Jesus renews that promise of God when He says: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Henry van Dyke very beautifully says, commenting on this passage, that as long as God lives and our souls live, so long this pledge stands. It is true we can not always feel this presence. But we can always know that it is there, always think of it, so long as thought endures, always rest upon it

forever and forever; and the reason why this promise is given is that we may hold fast to this truth. There may be a moment in the very depth of sorrow and anguish when the Presence is hidden from us. But it is not because God is absent. It is because we are stunned, unconscious. It is like passing through a surgical operation. The time comes for the ordeal. The anesthetic is ready. You are about to become unconscious. You stretch out your hand to your friend. "Don't leave me, don't forsake me," you say. The last thing that you feel is the clasp of that hand, the last thing you see is the face of that friend. Then a moment of darkness, a blank—and the first thing you feel is the hand, the first thing you see is the face of love again. So the angel of God's face stands by us, bends above us, and we may know that He will be there even when all else fails. Our friends die, our possessions take wings and fly away, our honors fade, our strength fails, but beside every moldering ruin, and every open grave, in the fading light of every sunset, in the gathering gloom of every twilight, amid the mists that shroud the great ocean beyond the

verge of mortal life, there is one sweet mighty voice that says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. In all thy affliction I will be with thee, and the angel of my face shall save thee."

V

We have a promise of honor to those who love God. "I will deliver him and honor him," is the word of God. As this promise is coupled with "deliverance," about which we were speaking a moment ago, I take it that the honor referred to is an honor that comes from goodness and nobility of character, the honor which a man has whose influence is unconsciously shedding blessing as fragrance exhales from flowers. There is a legend that there once lived a saint so good that the angels came down from heaven to see how a man could be so holy. He simply went about his daily life, diffusing virtue as the star diffuses light and the flower perfume, without being aware of it. The angels said to God, "O Lord, grant the gift of miracles." God replied, "I consent: ask him what he wishes." So they said to the saint, "Should you like the touch of your hand to heal the sick?" "No," he

answered, "I would rather God should do that." "Should you like to convert guilty souls and bring back wandering hearts to the right path?" "No; that is the mission of angels." "Should you like to become a model of patience, attracting men by the luster of your virtues and thus glorifying God?" "No," replied the saint, "if men should be so attached to me, they would become estranged from God. The Lord has other means of glorifying Himself." "What do you desire, then?" cried the angels. "What can I wish for?" asked the saint, smiling. "That God gives me His grace; with that shall I not have everything?" But the angels insisted, "You must ask for a miracle or one will be forced upon you." "Very well," said the saint. "That I may do a great deal of good without ever knowing it."

The angels were greatly perplexed. They took counsel together, and resolved upon this plan. Every time the saint's shadow should fall behind him or at either side, so that he could not see it, it should have the power to cure disease, soothe pain, and comfort sorrow.

And so, according to the legend, it came to pass. When the saint walked along, his shadow thrown on the ground on either side or behind him made arid paths green, caused withered plants to bloom, gave clear water to dried-up brooks, fresh color to pale little children, and joy to unhappy mothers. And whatever other honor God gives to those who love Him, He will give this, the greatest of all honors, that our daily lives may unconsciously make the world better and happier.

VI

And finally, we have the promise of a lengthened and blest life. "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." My dear old friend, Dr. Cuyler, writing on this promise in his old age shortly before going away, says that it goes deeper than chronology. It describes a life that is long enough to fulfil life's highest purpose. If you and I live long enough to do what God made us for, and Christ redeemed us for, ought not that to satisfy us? Life is measured by deeds, and not by hour-marks on a dial. In the warm morning sun of grace many a young soul

grows fully ripe for a harvest of glory. This last promise, "and show him my salvation," coupled as it is with the promise to satisfy us in regard to our lives, would indicate the promise of happiness and satisfaction which only the consciousness of triumph in the great purpose of human living could give. It is something we can not win alone, but which we can have through the divine help. Some one sings:

I can not do it alone,
Waves run fast and high,
And fogs close chill around,
And the light goes out of the sky;
But I know that we two
Shall win in the end—
Jesus and I.

Coward, and wayward, and weak,
I change with the changing sky;
To-day, so eager and brave,
To-morrow not caring to try;
But He never gives in,
So we two shall win—
Jesus and I.

At harvest time in England a good many Irish laborers go over to help. There was one man who was accustomed to go to the same place year after year, a sullen, moody man.

But one year he came over completely changed—bright, joyful, ready to help, encouraging every one. And they twitted him as to the cause, and made humorous suggestions as to the change that had come over him. At last he turned to them all and said: "You are quite right about the change, but you are wrong about the cause. The truth is, I have found the greatest Friend in the world, Jesus, and my heart is just full of joy." And to the heart that loves Him, God will give that satisfaction which can only come from a consciousness of victory.

Dr. Jowett was once on a railway journey from Edinburgh, Scotland, to his home. There was in the compartment with him a young fellow, who had fought his way up from poverty, overcoming all obstacles, and had just succeeded in taking his degree in the university. The burden of anxiety was lifted, and Dr. Jowett says that behind his paper he could hear the young fellow chuckling with laughter. He did not need to ask him why. He knew. The fear and uncertainty had gone out of his life. It just bubbled up in laughter, as a child laughs. The beautiful thing about

the laughter of a child is that it bubbles up like a spring. That young fellow had the buoyant laughter of a child. He laughed because he must. Henry Drummond, one morning in Switzerland, went out on the high Alps alone and in the august heights of those uplifted splendors "just laughed." Could there be anything more beautiful than that? A man in intimate touch with his Maker, and when he is amid the splendors of his Lord, his soul just leaps in laughter, the merry-hearted, buoyant, optimistic laughter of a child of God.

THE PORTER AT THE GATE OF SOULS

“To him the porter openeth.”—John 10 : 3.

THE PORTER who opens the door to Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit. He has ever opened the way to Jesus. It was He who opened the gates of prophecy to the coming Savior. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The Old Testament is throbbing with expectation and hope and promise of the coming of Jesus. Long centuries before the appearance of Christ the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of Isaiah so that he looked down through the dust of the years and beheld the Christ coming as a poor man and humble, and he cried out: “He shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: And we

hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

But the Holy Spirit not only showed to the prophets the humiliation of Jesus, and the sacrificial side of His life and death, He revealed to them also the blessing which was to come to men through the sacrifice of Jesus. For again the Holy Spirit holds the vision of the coming day before the eyes of Isaiah, and he exclaims, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. . . . And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be

called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

For thousands of years the Holy Spirit lighted up the way, from age to age pointing on to the coming of the Christ. He was the porter that opened the gates of prophecy to the Savior of the world.

The Holy Spirit opened the portals of this earthly life to the Lord Jesus. When the angel appeared unto Mary, prophesying the birth of Christ, he said: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And after the birth of Jesus, when the infant Christ was brought into the temple, Simeon,

a man upon whom was the Holy Ghost, and to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, came, led by the Spirit, into the temple: and when Joseph and Mary brought in the child Jesus, the venerable man took the babe up in his arms and blest God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

The Holy Spirit was the porter to open the gate to the public ministry of Jesus. When Christ came to the Jordan to be baptized of John, it is recorded that "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." And afterward the story of the temptation of Jesus begins with the significant words, "Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." And after the forty days of temptation had passed, the

same careful biographer says, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." And immediately afterward on the occasion of His first sermon at Nazareth, this was the text He chose: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

The Holy Spirit was the porter to open the gates of death to Jesus. It is true that Christ gave His life for the sheep as a good shepherd, but He did not go alone into the valley of shadows, for the author of the book of Hebrews says, speaking of the precious atoning blood of Jesus Christ in comparison with the ancient sacrifices, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The Holy Spirit was the porter to open the gates of the resurrection. It is true that

Jesus rose from the dead by His own power. As He Himself says, He had power to lay down His life and power to take it up again. But the Holy Spirit was the porter to open the gate, for does not Paul say in the opening of his epistle to the Romans, in giving his own credentials, "Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"? And again Paul speaks in Ephesians about "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

The Holy Spirit is the porter who opens the gate of the human heart to Christ. Go back to those days after the ascension of Jesus. The disciples, timid and afraid, gathered together daily to pray for that divine comfort and power that Jesus had promised should come upon them, and on the day of Pentecost, when they were assembled together with one accord in one place, suddenly there came the wind of heaven, and filled all the house where they

were, and it seemed as tho cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of them, and they were filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and were given new courage and utterance such as they had never known before. And in this new power they went forth unto the multitude, and while Peter preached to the great throng, preached with an eloquence and a persuasive speech such as he had never dreamed of being able to use, the others, Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the woman who owed the Master so much in forgiveness, and Martha, and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, and James, the Lord's brother, and Matthew, the converted business man, and Bartimæus, who had been restored from blindness, and one who had a story of cleansing from leprosy to tell, and John, who had laid his head on the very bosom of the Savior—these and a hundred others, every one of whom had a separate story of tenderness and compassion and divine love at the hands of Jesus, quickened by the presence of the Holy Ghost talked every one to his neighbor, and in that way the Holy Spirit, working through these one hundred and twenty

earnest men and women, opened the gate of three thousand souls to Jesus Christ in a single day.

And the Porter is still opening the hearts of men to Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individual men and women in the churches who is the porter at the gate of souls. If we preach Jesus Christ without the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves without power. The sinful heart is depraved and wicked and locked against Jesus. If we would open the door to the Savior, we must have the aid of the Divine Porter. I fear that here is our greatest weakness in the church. We get the impression that the church will succeed because it has money, or because it has learning, or because it has numbers, or because it has well organized ecclesiastical machinery, but, my dear friends, nothing can give real success to the Christian church but the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of its membership. One of the greatest of our English Methodist preachers said truly not long ago that all machinery is unavailing unless it expresses the light, and grace, and power of the Spirit of truth and holiness. This wonderfully

compact organization of the church was the crystallization of great and holy emotion and fervent service of Christ. The Spirit of the living God was in it. But if it is to continue to do great things for humanity, the divine Spirit must abide in it. It is true that it may go on for a time seeming to do good work after the Spirit has departed from it, but terrible must be the disaster if it thus continues.

I remember a few years ago, over in one of the Eastern States, a railroad engineer died on his engine. It was one of the engines where the fireman is separated from the engineer, and so for a long time nobody knew the engineer was dead. It was an express train, and it thundered along at forty miles an hour in the hands of a corpse, with a dead engineer lying in the cab. It was not until the train had gone past two or three signals to stop that the wondering and frightened fireman climbed over the engine into the cab where the dead man lay, and stopt the train on the very edge of the threatened disaster that would probably have cost scores of lives. And yet for nearly a hundred miles the

machinery of that train and great railroad had been going its own way, and carrying its precious freight, with a dead man at the throttle.

I can imagine such a fate happening to a church. It has the organization, it has a certain momentum that has come down from holy fathers and mothers, and it would go on for a while even if there were a dead man as a preacher in the pulpit, and dead men for stewards and trustees and Sunday-school teachers, and only mummies in the pews; but in the end it would mean disaster and terrible ruin. The blest traditions of our Christianity and of our church life are fragrant with the mighty presence of the Spirit of the living God. And we must ever keep before our eyes and in our hearts the memory of that presence and power and daily assure ourselves by precious experience that the same Spirit abides with us. All our organization is but a mockery unless the mighty dynamic of the Spirit of God is in us, and with us, opening the hearts of men to the Savior.

The Holy Spirit is the porter who opens to the human soul the highest and noblest life in

opening the door to Christ, for Christianity is not a preparation for death only, but a preparation for life. The poet truly says:

Life is wasted if we spend it
Idly dreaming how to die;
Study how to use, not end, it;
Work to finish, not to fly.

Godly living—best preparing
For a life with God above;
Work! and banish anxious caring!
Death ne'er comes to active love.

Death is but an opening portal
Out of life to life on high;
Man is vital, more than mortal,
Meant to live, not doomed to die.

Praise for present mercies giving,
With good works your age endow;
Death defy by Christlike living,
Heaven attain by service now.

Now the supreme enthusiasms of life, the red blood of the highest and noblest living, that drives the soul onward to grander and still grander achievements, can come only to the man or the woman to whom the Holy Spirit has been porter to the divine Christ. A man may know Christ in a scholarly way and yet find nothing to stir his blood and

revitalize his life with a never-dying impulse; but no man ever comes to know Christ through the revelation of the Holy Spirit in his inmost soul but there is a new birth of power from heaven within him. No man truly and really lives without this. President Jordan of Stanford University has published a book under the title of "Life's Enthusiasms." The author tells us that his motto was taken from an old author's counsel to his son who was about to leave home. "Take with you, my son," said the father, "a goodly stock of enthusiasms, for you will lose many of them long before the life-journey is over." And so the purpose of the book is to show that the ideals of youth are like candles, most of which burn out early, so that when the night falls the traveler may have to grope his way. Therefore, a surplus supply of candles must be borne forward. And we know that this is true for worldly men. The candle of fame burns low, and when the wreath is won it is flung away as worthless. The candle of power, and the candle of wealth, and the candle of wisdom burn down into the socket. Even for Solomon, who had received such rich endow-

ment from God, the enthusiasms all died out and the full stock of zest was exhausted. But for the man to whom the Holy Spirit stands as porter at the gate of the heart to open the door to Christ, life becomes happier, work sweeter, tasks lighter, hopes brighter, as old age approaches. To the spiritually minded man the enthusiasm of life increases. Paul never knew what discouragement meant. John painted the glowing canvas of the book of Revelation when nearly a hundred years old. John Wesley past fourscore years was the most charming of preachers, the most delightful of companions, and most fruitful of revivalists. Thank God, the world is full of men and women who live victorious over all life's troubles, who travel forward radiating good cheer and hope to the very end of life, revealing so much of the Spirit of Christ that all who know them glorify God.

I must not close without a few words concerning the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is here and now trying to open the door of some hearts that Jesus may come in. In the book of Revelation John represents Jesus as saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and

knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." By the voice we understand the secret influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The voice explains the knock, and tells us who it is that stands at the door waiting for full possession of the heart. Oh, the tenderness and compassion that is exprest in the figure! Your benefactor, the Savior who died on the cross in your behalf, is standing at the door of your heart like a beggar, asking of you, when you ought to be asking of Him.

If in the service we have had this morning the Spirit of God has spoken to your heart, and you have been conscious of your sin and your great need of Christ and forgiveness, then that means that Christ is waiting there, and that you may be now saved if you will yield to the divine influence. I have read somewhere that during the war between Russia and Japan the mothers and daughters of Japan conceived the idea of making little white caps with the sign of the cross in red on each cap. These they sent to the battle-field, and after the terrible times of carnage, as the

nurses passed through the ranks, they saw those who were wounded and dying and dead; but on the wounded, if there was any chance of life, they put the white cap; and by and by, when the surgeons came along, there was no need to ask, "Where is the chance of life?" The little white cap, with the sign of the cross in red, said, "Here is one. Come to my help before it is too late." I may not be able to see the white cap to-day, with its red cross over your heart, telling that tho you are wounded cruelly by sin, there is still hope for your salvation, but the Holy Spirit has revealed it to you, and is now revealing it to you, and I can only beg of you that you yield the door of your heart to the Savior whom the Spirit brings, and let Him come in who has not only the power to forgive your sins, but to renew a right spirit within you, and lead you, through holy living, up to the very throne of God.

THE GENTLENESS OF GOD

“With loving-kindness have I drawn thee.”—Jeremiah 31 : 3
(Am. Rev.).

IN LOOKING over a large group of college buildings one cold winter day, I noticed that tho they were all nicely warmed, there seemed to be no furnace or heating-plant in any of the buildings. When I spoke about the matter, I was shown at quite a distance away a central heating-plant which furnished heat for all. So if we glance at the sentence immediately preceding our text, we behold the heating-plant for the world’s heart-warming. The gentleness and loving-kindness which ministers to man in every age and in every land has its source there. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love,” is the declaration of our Heavenly Father. Mr. Spurgeon says that the Christian needs to take up into himself, as Gideon’s fleece absorbed the dew, this great and glorious statement. It is an actual fact. The Lord is loving you. Put those two pronouns together, “I” and “thee.”

“I,” the Infinite, the inconceivably glorious; “thee,” a poor, lost, undeserving sinner. See the link between the two! See the diamond rivet which joins them together for eternity: “I have loved thee.” See the antiquity of this love: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” I loved thee when I died for thee upon the Cross, yes, I loved thee long before, and therefore did I die. I loved thee when I made the heavens and the earth, with a view to thine abode therein; yes, I loved thee before I made sea or shore. There is a beginning to the world, but there is no beginning for the love of God to His children. Nor does that exhaust the meaning of “everlasting love.” There has never been a moment when the Lord has not loved His children. There has been no pause, nor ebb, nor break in the love of God to His own. That love knows no variability, neither shadow of turning. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” You may take a leap into the future, and that love will still be with you. “Everlasting” evidently lasts forever. We shall come to die, and this shall be a downy pillow for our death-bed, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”

When we wake up in the great future world to which we are hastening, we shall find infinite happiness in "everlasting love." When the judgment day shall come, and the sight of the great white throne makes all hearts to tremble, and the trumpet sounds loud and long, and our bodies wake up from the silent grave, we shall rejoice in this divine assurance, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Sun, moon, and stars may be blotted out, and the heavens rolled together as a scroll, and the clock of time cease to mark the hours because time shall be lost in eternity, but our heaven shall always be in this, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

This is what gives an atmosphere of hope to the universe. It is this that makes us face the future with courage. My friend, Dr. Frederick Shannon, of Brooklyn, New York, tells how he called up a justly proud and happy grandfather one morning, and said, referring to a call he had made the day before: "It was worth a trip across the city to see that beautiful boy." Smiling so broadly that Shannon could almost see the smile through the telephone receiver, the grandfather said:

“We think he is a fine boy. He left me last night in the storm, but I have his picture here on the desk before my eyes.” What would you think of a little child, scarcely old enough to toddle from chair to chair, setting out in the night and the storm, from his grandparents’ home in New York toward the far-off woods of Maine? Would you not think that that fond grandfather, even tho the child’s picture lies upon his desk, would be greatly worried about the little fellow’s journey? And yet he told his friend without a quaver in his voice, that the child left him in the night and the storm. Shall I tell you why there was no trembling anxiety in that grandfather’s voice as he spoke? This is why: He saw the little boy wrapt up snug and warm, folded close to his mother’s bosom, and thus he set out upon his journey. My friends, we are all the children of God, and if we will but yield ourselves to the Divine care, we are in this world and in all worlds to which God shall take us, surrounded and sustained and preserved by the brooding care of a God who pities His children like a father, and seeks to comfort them like a mother.

I

Our text suggests to us that God never forces a man's will. He does not compel, but with loving-kindness He draws us. There is nothing more interesting or important than the individuality of every man and woman, every child in the world. Dr. Henry Scott Holland, the eloquent Canon of St. Paul's, in London, declares that the intensity of human individuality is forever surprizing and shocking our anticipation. It overleaps all our categories; it refuses to conform to our conventions. We struggle in vain to bring all the people we know under some standard of our own. All the while the unexpected outcome defies us; the individual man refuses to be sampled with others. He is himself, after all, and no other. He is not of a species—rather, he is a species in himself. Never before, and never again, can there be a man just like him. He is a novel creation; he is unique, and he is alone. He has his own peculiar stamp, his own special flavor. We sometimes think that a certain group of people are very much alike, that when we have known

one we have known all. But if we are brought in close contact we find that in each separate personality we encounter a new problem. Every man we meet shatters our mold and forces us to take new ground. How pathetically this lesson is often imprest on two parents bending together over the crib of their sleeping child. They watch as the breath softly comes and goes—how tender, how delicate, it all is! Yet do they think this child is pliable and that they can make it what they will? If so, they will find out that even before it can speak, before it knows how to pronounce the name of “mother,” they will come up against something which is stubbornly set on going its own way. It is its own mysterious self, this babe of theirs. They can only linger around it and keep close at hand and note the opening miracle, and await the surprizes of disclosure. Personality has its sacred right to be what it is. Individuality must fulfil itself. We can no more bind it down by our schemes and classifications than Samson could be bound by the green withes of the Philistines.

This ought to make us very charitable toward each other. It ought to make us very

tolerant of each other. Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthians, says: "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's even so are we Christ's." This suggests to us that the equal right of every individual man to be himself has God for its background. It is the divine origin of each separate personality that endows it with this inalienable sanctity. If I am bound by my own claim to individuality to allow the like claim in others, it is because their claim and mine have the same source. It is God who gives me my worth. I am an expression of His desire. I am this in my own separate self. No one can take my place, or do what I can, or be what I am. To wipe me out is to wipe out a thought, a desire, an act, a decree of God Himself. And for that very reason every other individuality that exists demands of me the allegiance that I owe to the God who made me. I must regard it. I must find room for it; I must pay it worship, because of God, who is within and behind him.

Now all this makes it very clear why God will not and can not in the very nature of

things, force any man's will. He has made us so like Himself in our individuality, in our sacred personality, that the power of choice must abide in us. But as a mother broods over her child, with patience and wisdom, born of experience, and with a warmth of tenderness and love, and seeks by her gentleness to draw it into the safe and righteous path, so the loving-kindness of God is ever seeking to incline us to truth and righteousness.

II

God draws men by great example rather than by great rebuke. There are warnings in the Bible and there is stern rebuke, but there is infinitely more of tender entreaty and more yet of the possibilities of the human character. The whole story of Christ is that. It is said that Michelangelo corrected his pupil's mistakes, not by criticizing his work, but by simply sketching a more perfect picture beside it. How much easier it is to see faults in others than to present the perfect picture ourselves! Much of the fault-finding in the home is simply an expression of selfishness. Where it rules,

love is not found. To be always told of flaws and forever rebuked of shortcomings is one of the most depressing experiences one can undergo, and there is no greater illustration of the gentleness of God than that He is forever seeking to lift us up by giving us encouragement to better things. For every stinging rebuke of conscience, God gives men ten calls through the appeals of beauty and mercy and gentleness to the better way.

Longfellow, in his poem inspired by the Christlike work of Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War, sang of this power of every good deed to inspire and attract us to higher living.

Whene'er a noble deed is wrought,
Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts, in glad surprize,
To higher levels rise.

The tidal wave of deeper souls
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares
Out of all meaner cares.

Honor to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs,
And by their overflow
Raise us from what is low!

And this is Christ's way of saving the world. He said of Himself, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Christ will not compel men, He will not break down their personality, but the magnetism of His love will draw them. There is a story told of a little boy who was operated upon by Dr. Lorenz, the famous Austrian surgeon. As soon as the boy came out from the influence of the anesthetic, he said to the doctor, "It will be a long time before my mother hears the last of this, doctor."

The operation was a great success. When the plaster cast was taken off, a friend came to take him home. In doing so, he called the boy's attention to the grandeur of the hospital, but tho the boy admired it, he said, "I like the doctor best." He spoke of the nurses, and tho interested, he said, "They are nothing compared with the doctor." It was a great joy to his mother when she saw the boy's foot entirely cured, but all that the boy could say to the mother was, "You ought to know the doctor that made me walk." So the mightiest power in the world to-day or in any day, to win men from sin to righteousness,

is in the happy, grateful testimony to Christ of those who have been drawn by His love and His gentleness and have been forgiven of their sins through His name.

III

God's gentleness and loving-kindness are shown in the way He makes us forget the things that have marred us and dwarfed us, and makes us conscious that He Himself has forgotten in that most wonderful mystery of the Divine forgiveness. The greatest torment of sin is that we have no power to forget it. Out of the depths of the sinful heart, the natural cry is, that God will forget and let us forget. The Psalmist's heart-broken plea,

“Hide thy face from my sins
And blot out all mine iniquities . . .
Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions . . .
Remember thou me,”

is true to life and utters a cry which has been in all our hearts. And there is nothing more tender and beautiful in all the Bible—and the most beautiful things that were ever written are in the Bible—than the assurances given

over and over again that if we repent of our sins, with a repentance that turns from them to God, God will not only forgive them, but that He will forget them. Listen to some of these declarations: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake: and I will not remember thy sin." And again, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah, for I will forgive their iniquities and their sins will I remember no more."

The love of God lets Jesus Christ wrap His infinite righteousness, the white robes of His purity, about us, and God sees only the perfect beauty and purity of the Christ in whom we are, and for His sake God's loving-kindness covers all our limitations. A blind boy took the examinations for admission to one of our great universities. His father sat beside him and wrote the papers at his dictation. Occasionally the father, in his scrupulous honesty, asked the boy to spell the harder words, and when he spelled them inaccurately, the father wrote down the inaccuracy. All the

errors were faithfully recorded. The father said it was one of the hardest ordeals of his life, to be the recorder of his blind son's blunders and mistakes. He dared not do otherwise. But through Jesus Christ, God dares forget. And the love of God blots out the very record of our sins. No wonder the prophet Micah exclaimed, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in loving-kindness. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

IV

Our study this morning must impress upon our hearts that if we would successfully work together with God in uplifting humanity, we must fall into harmony with His great plan and work by attraction—the attraction of loving-kindness. Dr. Gunsaulus has well said that if we are going to work to save men and make a better civilization, we must have some-

thing better than mere human socialism. The shallow philosophy of to-day says, "We will all work together, we are workers together with men: I lean against you and you lean against me. And Jones will lean against us, and there will be three for Williams to lean against." Here we are every man trying to trade something that is not complete in order to get something that is complete. All that is a rope of sand. We shall never do our best until we see men as God sees them, until we realize the material in which God is working. We must have God's vision of men; we must be working together with God for men. When we are workers together with God, then we have a divine Christ who is able to give men a new heart into whose presence we may bring them. Christ will say to them, "I am your Redeemer. I buy things back and take them out of pawn. I will give you a new life, a new heart, a new character." It is when we get in touch with God and the golden chains of our prayers are twined about His throne, so that the atmosphere of His loving-kindness pervades us, that we are able to help men and save them.

And we must not imagine that it is only in the great emergencies and opportunities of life that we can help humanity. God is interested in little things, and the greater we become the greater we will be interested in little things. President Hadley of Yale University said in an address to his students: "In the day of judgment the wicked will be condemned, not for the great sins which they have committed, but for the little services which they have left unrendered. The righteous will be distinguished, not by the great deeds which they have remembered, but by the little deeds that they have forgotten."

The spirit of love is the judgment test for every one of us, and the spirit of gentleness and loving-kindness in little things. Some poet whose name I do not know sings the story of

"One of the Little Women, she came up to heaven's gate;
And seeing the throng were pressing, she signed that she fain
would wait.

'For I was not great nor noble,' she said, 'I was poor and plain;
And should I go boldly forward, I know it would be in vain.'

"She sat near the shining portal, and looked at the surging crowd
Of them that were kings and princes, of them that were rich and
proud;

And sudden she trembled greatly, for one with a brow like flame
Came to her, and hailed her gladly, and spoke to her her name:

“‘Come, enter the jeweled gateway,’ He said, ‘for the prize is
thine;

The work that in life you rendered was work that was fair and
fine;

So come, while the rest stand waiting, and enter in here and
now—

A crown of the life eternal is waiting to press thy brow.’

“Then trembled the Little Woman, and cried: ‘It may not be I!
Here wait they that wrought with greatness, so how may I pass
them by?

I carved me no wondrous statues, I painted no wondrous things,
I spoke no tremendous sayings that rang in the ears of kings;

“‘I toiled in my little cottage, I spun and I baked and swept;
I sewed and I patched and mended—oh, lowly the house I kept!
I sang to my little children, I led them in worthy ways,
And so I might not grow famous, I knew naught but care-bound
days.

“‘So was it by night and morning, so was it by week and year;
I worked with my weary fingers through days that were bright or
drear;

And I have grown old and wrinkled, and I have grown gray and
bent;

I ask not for chants of glory, now that I have found content.’

“‘Arise!’ cried the waiting angel, ‘Come first of the ones that
wait,

For you are the voices singing, for you do we ope the gate;
So great as has been thy labor, so great shall be thy reward!’
Then he gave the Little Woman the glory of the Lord.”

THE GOLDEN CHURCH

“I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.”—Rev. 1 : 12, 13.

JOHAN, the apostle of love, no longer a young man, as he was when at the Last Supper he lay with his head upon Jesus' breast, but an old man now, grown more loving and wise through the years, an exile, banished to the Isle of Patmos, is in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and catches this wonderful vision of the churches that are his peculiar care and which are rarely out of his mind during these days of banishment.

He is not left in doubt, but is plainly told that the seven golden candlesticks represent the seven churches in Asia Minor, which are the churches that are specially on his heart. A separate and distinct message is given to him for each one of these churches, and it must have made his heart bound with joy and gratitude to behold them in their relation to Christ and as they were seen by the eyes of

God. The world about them was wicked and idolatrous and looked upon them with contempt, but God saw them as pure gold, illuminated and glorified by the presence of Christ. And so John seeks to rally them with this vision of their magnificent privileges. Insignificant as they might seem when judged by material standards, petty and provincial as their sphere looked compared with the great heathen world, they were in God's sight splendid and secure. Their narrow lot was glorified by a shining revelation of Christ's ceaseless care and active love. Round them difficulties and dangers might swarm, but within them was the Son of man, living and watchful on behalf of His own.

The true glory of the church lies in the presence of the Son of man. Dr. Robertson Nicoll truly says that this has always been the faith which has heartened the true members of the church. They have risen over and over again to minister bravely to the world and keep the light of God's faith burning, because they have realized that Christ ceases not to minister to them, trimming and reviving their own faith by His inward touch. The

tarnished gold is obvious enough. The flickering light is only too patent. But as the true patriot tenaciously cherishes faith in his country, refusing to relax his concern on her behalf even when her policy and actions seem to discredit her ideals, so the Christian will sturdily face the actual condition of the churches, not because he shuts his eyes weakly to their defects, but because he sees them as in God's sight, seven golden candlesticks with the Son of man in the midst of them. It was this faith that nerved the heart of the little German monk four hundred years ago and made him the mightiest power in the world in his day, and caused the name of Martin Luther to stand forever as a synonym of faith in God. He saw the errors and defects of the church, but he saw also the undying love of Jesus Christ for His people.

No one saw the defects of the church more than John Wesley. No one grieved over them more than he, and yet no one was so hopeful for the church as he. He poured out his life as a libation before God in glad and glorious hope, because he shared John's vision of the Christ in the midst of the churches.

We must never for a moment lose sight of the fact that the presence of Christ in the church to-day is its true glory. We are so tempted to think other things more important. Wealth and culture and social position and physical prosperity in general are often mistaken as indications of success in the Christian Church, but we must not be deceived. A church might have all that and be very poor gilding without any true illumination. And, on the other hand, physical poverty might be apparent, persecution might rage as fiercely as in the days of the apostles, but if Christ, the ever-living Son of man, be in the midst of the church, causing its members to live in His spirit, to do His deeds, showing forth the spiritual illumination which only comes from Him, the true gold of Christian glory will be manifest.

I

Our study of this theme should teach us that wherever the church has lost power, or has lost its hold on the men and women surrounding it, the way to regain that hold is not by any physical, or worldly, or spectacular

method, but by the renewing of spiritual vitality in the church itself. John Wesley was once asked how to convert Ireland to the religion of the Apostles, and his reply was that if the preachers and laymen of the church in Ireland would live and preach like the apostles the whole problem would be solved. And so I am convinced that the remedy for any loss of power or control which the Christian church may have anywhere experienced is not in the spectacular but in the spiritual. The great thing demanded is that the church return and recall the supremely religious ends for which God called the churches into existence and set Christ in the midst of them. The high aims of the Christian church are worship and service, fellowship with God and man. All else is gilt, not gold. The vital church is the church needed always.

Vitality is a strange and wonderful thing. I have been reading recently a very interesting article in a foreign journal on this subject. The writer discusses the reason why a certain statesman was adored and almost idolized in his native city, and he finally comes to the conclusion that the main reason is to be found

in his unquenchable, irrepressible, and indomitable vitality. When vitality is seen personified, in full play, meeting all emergencies, rallying after every blow, and rising to every occasion, it is, wherever it is seen, the idol of mankind. More especially true is this when the vitality has been maintained through a long series of years and seems to defy the assaults of time. The full, rich life whose spark is always alight is welcome to every one. Cheering, sustaining, invigorating, and elating, this vitality constitutes a leader. Nobody who possesses it ever feels old; he keeps something of the boy in him. He changes his interests, but never falls into routine. The spring and facility of abundant life lead to variations, to modifications, but always to advance.

Vitality is the secret of the orator's power. It was Mr. Gladstone's extraordinary vitality, even more than what he said, that made him so consummate a master in speech. The quick eye, the speaking face, the eloquent gestures, the passion of the voice, swayed the most hostile. The same was true of Phillips Brooks. Robert Hall, who must have been one of the

very greatest of preachers, had a low and weak voice, but the power that went from him was such that often before he concluded his sermon his whole audience would be standing, having unconsciously risen to their feet. Indeed, he had often to lock them in their pews—not to keep them from running away, but to keep them from crowding too closely about him while he poured forth on them the passion of his soul.

Now we all recognize that for the man, the individual, there is no power like vitality, that it is the vital personality which holds tenacious grip upon those about it, and this should illustrate to us the secret of power in the Christian church. It is the vital church which transforms the world, which sways the community where it is, and grips men in their sins and draws them by holy magnetism to Christ as their Savior. Nothing that is merely spectacular, or evanescent, or transitory in its character, nothing that is merely offered as an entertainment to the mind or sense, whether it be in speech or music or spectacular demonstration, can really add anything to the true power of the Christian church over the souls of men

and women about it. It is only an increased spiritual vitality which can do that. Surely there is a message in this for us. About us are a multitude of worldly men and women who are careless of God and know not Christ in any personal comforting sense as their Savior. Trouble walks like a ghost among them, sickness is their common lot, death is their heritage, they know all the sorrows that break men's hearts, but in the great depths of their souls they are "without God and without hope in the world." Oh! the pitiable need of humanity about us. Angels must weep at the waste of human life in these great cities. The pathos of it, the tragedy of it is beyond all words to describe. Yet there is only one thing that can heal these terrible hurts, there is only one thing that can save modern cities, and that is a Christian church that is vital and throbbing with the warm blood of the Christ, tender, loving, God-like—a church whose life is felt rather than professed, which will attract by its own glorious power and beauty. Oh, brothers and sisters, to have a church like that there must be men and women and children like that, and not one of us is so improv-

erished in character or spirit but what if we open our hearts in full surrender for the Christ to dwell in us and dominate all our thinking and living, this glorious vitality may be ours!

II

If we are to be the most useful members of the Christian church that it is possible for us to be, it is necessary that we should frequently catch a vision like that of John's of what constitutes the true glory of the church. It is true of every great relation of our lives that we are always tempted to drop into the routine and prosaic, and lose out of it, and out of our thought about it, that which is poetic and ideal. And if that continues long enough, all the beauty and glory of that relation departs. It is no longer gold; it is only gilt. This is true of marriage and family life. The divorce courts are full of people who might have lived beautiful and happy lives in homes that were a perennial source of comfort and strength, if they had only occasionally recalled the spirit which alone makes marriage beautiful and glorious. Love is the only thing that can make

marriage or home life permanently comfortable or happy, and if all love-making cease out of the home, if there be no special occasions when unusual expressions and manifestations of love transfigure the prosaic round of every-day living, the family bond will loosen and die.

It is true of the relations between the employer and employee. It is one of the saddest things in the world to-day that we are compelled to look out upon so much warfare between those who labor and those who employ labor. The possibilities are so beautiful and so glorious where the relation is different.

For many years before the panic of 1893 one of our large American manufacturers had been giving peculiar attention to the treatment of his employees, not only treating them with justice, but holding toward them the same attitude that he himself would like to find in others. In return for their service he had given not only his money, but his personal friendship and sympathy, and had thus made himself a trusted and beloved neighbor to all his people.

Well, the panic came. A month or so after

it began, and when large concerns were failing in every direction, there filed into his office one morning some fifteen or twenty men, representing the several shops in the plant. Their manners and looks were serious, and in spite of himself the manufacturer feared that trouble had come at last. Finally one of the workmen said that they had thought very long over the matter that had brought them, and that they hoped he would be prepared to accede to their request—that they had noticed that large concerns which had stood the stress of many panics were failing every day; that his own warehouses were filling with goods he couldn't sell, and that they presumed he, like others, was unable to obtain payment for goods already sold, and that they feared he might be in danger as well as other concerns; that some of them had been with him for a few years, some for many years, and some the length of a generation; that they had always received fair wages, and had been able to save some money, and while the individual savings were not large, the aggregate amounted to a good many thousands of dollars and that they had come to tell him that the

whole of their savings was at his disposal for the use of the company, if needed.

What a glorious world it would be if the relations between employer and employee were like that the wide world around. But to make it so, there must be again and again a vision of the true relation between man and man which lifts them out of the mere matter of wages up into the brotherhood and fellowship of human souls.

Now this truth which we have illustrated by these two relations which we sustain in our every-day living is just as clear when we apply it to the church. If we are to be of real and vital value to the church, we must have our days of transfiguration, when the church stands transfigured before us and we see it as true gold, with the Son of man in the midst of it. It must be more to us than a mere social club. It must be infinitely more to us than a place of entertainment. It must be a fellowship of souls gathered about Jesus Christ as the living and loving center.

There are two things that can make this possible: prayer and service. John was in the spirit on the Lord's day. His heart was

lifted to God in prayer, and it was in that communion of prayer that this divine vision came to him. Thus living in communion with God because our whole lives are lived in the spirit of prayer makes it possible for us to see the church and its great work with the eyes of God. Some one says Jesus practised the prayer of communion. His night visits to the hillside meant fellowship with God.

A father was sitting at work at his desk one day. His little boy came into the room, and sat down on a chair, as quietly as possible. After a long time the father looked up. "Why are you here, sonny?" "Just to be beside you, papa." That was heart communion. The prayer of communion leads us to seek to get God's point of view in our lives, to understand what He is trying to do with us, to put ourselves in line with His plan.

Sincere devotion to the service of our fellows brings us into close fellowship with Christ and lets us see men from His standpoint. John bore those churches of Asia Minor upon his heart. He worked and suffered and interceded for them until he was able to catch the optimism of God about them, and saw them like

seven golden candlesticks with the Son of man in the midst of them. Humanity is glorious to the people who serve it. Sister Dora, after a long day's work in her Walsall Hospital for waifs and strays, for poor souls beaten down in the battle of life, often went to rest almost too tired to sleep. But over her head was a bell, to be sounded in spite of all her weariness when any sufferer needed her. And the bell bore this inscription, "The master is come and calleth for thee." If you live in that spirit you will never doubt the gold in humanity. The most hopeful people about the world and its salvation have been the people who carried its burdens most and gave themselves as a living sacrifice in its behalf. You could not have made Frances Willard believe that sobriety would not triumph and drunkenness die out of God's world. You could not have made John Howard believe that the world's prisons would not be reformed and humanized. You could not have made John Wesley or Catherine Booth believe that there was a sinner so lost or hardened in iniquity that Christ could not transform him into a saint. And so to-day the people who believe most in the Christian

church, in its power to help the world, are the people that are doing most for it, who are pouring out their souls in earnest and loving service. To them and to them only comes the vision of John of a church beautified and glorified until it is a candlestick of pure gold illuminated by the presence and the beauty of the Christ.

